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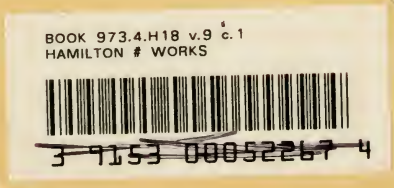

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Constitutional Edition

The Works of
Alexander Hamilton

Edited by
Henry Cabot Lodge

"The sacred rights of mankind are not to be rummaged for among old parchments or musty records. They are written, as with a sunbeam, in the whole volume of human nature, by the hand of the Divinity itself, and can never be erased or obscured by mortal power."
[HAMILTON—*The Farmer Refuted*, 1775, Æt. 18.]

"We are laboring hard to establish in this country principles more and more *national*, and free from all foreign ingredients, so that we may be neither 'Greeks nor Trojans,' but truly Americans."—[HAMILTON TO KING, 1796, Æt. 39.]

Volume IX

G. P. Putnam's Sons
New York and London
The Knickerbocker Press

973.4
H18
v.7

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

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MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS (*Continued*)

MISCELLANEOUS PAPERS

DEFENCE OF THE FUNDING SYSTEM

II

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE STATE DEBTS

(*Continued from Vol. VIII.*)

THE theory of our constitutions with respect to taxation is perhaps a new example in the world—that is to say, a concurrent and co-ordinate authority in one general head and in thirteen (now fifteen) distinct members of a confederacy united under that head to impose in detail upon individuals and upon all taxable objects.

Yet experience had demonstrated that a power in the general head to tax the States only in their collective capacities—that is, by the system of requisitions, was a system of imbecility and injustice: imbecility, because it did not produce to the common treasury the requisite supplies; injustice, because the separate efforts of the States under such a system, from the nature of things, would ever be unequal, and consequently their contributions disproportionate.

Hence, all those who agreed in the necessity of a union of the States under a common head, felt and

acknowledged that a change in the plan was an essential feature in a new arrangement of the constitution of General Government.

But though agreed in this general principle, they were not equally agreed in the application of the rule. Some were for a general and paramount power of taxation in the National Government, and either a subordinate or a limited (by being confined to particular objects) power of taxation in the State Governments. Some were for a division of the power of taxation, giving certain branches of it exclusively to the General Government, and other branches of it exclusively to the State Government. Others were for a general concurrent power of taxation in the Federal and State Governments.

The two first opinions equally presupposed a great difficulty of execution and danger of collision in a concurrent power of taxation, and sought to avoid it by different means. The last seems to have considered that difficulty and danger as less formidable than the embarrassments which belonged to either of the other schemes. And this opinion was adopted by the Convention, except with regard to the duties of imports and tonnage, which for cogent and obvious reasons was incompatible and was exclusively vested in the Federal head.

This course was, relatively to the existing state of things, the wisest. The subordination of the State power of taxation to that of the General Government, or the confining it to particular objects, would probably have been an insuperable obstacle to the adoption of the Constitution. The division of the power

between the Union and the States could not have been regulated upon any plan which would not either have left the General Government more restricted than was compatible with a due provision for the exigencies of the Union, or would have so confined the State Government as would have been equally an impediment to the success of the Constitution. Besides that, a truly eligible division, which consulted all the cases possible by the general principles of the Constitution, was intrinsically very difficult if not impracticable.

But though it is admitted that the course pursued by the Convention was the most expedient, yet it is not the less true that the plan involved inherent and great difficulties.

It may not unaptly be styled the Gordian-knot of our political situation.

To me there appeared but one way of untying or severing it, which was in practice to leave the States under as little necessity as possible of exercising the power of taxation. The narrowness of the limits of its exercise on one side left the field more free and unembarrassed to the other, and avoided essentially the interference and collisions to be apprehended from *inherent* difficulties on the plan of concurrent jurisdiction.

Thus, to give a clear field to the Government of the United States was so manifestly founded in good policy that the time must come when a man of sense would blush to dispute it.

It was essential to give effect to the objects of the Union. As to the past, the General Government was

to provide for the debts which the war that accomplished our Revolution had left upon us. These were to the debts which the same events had left upon the States individually as five to two nearly.

For the future, the General Government, besides providing for the expenses of its civil administration, which from obvious causes would unavoidably exceed those of the State Governments, and for a variety of other objects tedious to enumerate or define, was charged with the care of the common defence.

Reason and experience teach that the great mass of expense in every country proceeds from war. Our experience has already belied the reveries of those dreamers or impostors who were wont to weaken the argument arising from this source by promising to this country a perpetual exemption from war.

In the few years of our existence our frontiers have exhibited a state of desolating and expensive hostility. How narrowly have we thus far escaped a war with a great European Power? Who can say how long we shall be before we may be compelled to defend our independence against some one of the great competitors still engaged on that theatre?

The violent passions which have agitated the apostles of perpetual peace, and which were so near forcing our political ship upon the rock of war, which at this moment still impel her to the same ruinous point, are the mirrors in which they may read the refutation of their silly predictions, and the certainty that our nation is enough exposed to the chances of war to render a clear stage for commanding all our resources of taxation indispensable. Be-

sides actual war and danger of still greater, we have already experienced a domestic insurrection in which more than a million has been expended.

Without an assumption of the State debts which produced this effect, the first war with an European Power would have convinced us of the ineligibleness of our situation, of the weakness and embarrassment incident to fifteen or perhaps to fifty different systems of finance.

The foundation of the observation is obvious. Different States would have and actually have different predilections and prejudices on the subject of taxation. Some incline more to excises, or taxes on articles of consumption, than to taxes on real estate. Others favor the latter more than the former. In some stamp duties are not ill thought of; in others they are odious.

Suppose, what was the natural and probable effect of such a diversity of opinion, the States being left to make separate provisions for their particular debts had bottomed their provisions on different objects of revenue; that some had occupied the most productive objects of excise; that others had had recourse to taxes on real estate; that some had preferred to either duties on stamps; that a fourth class had sought the needed revenue from duties on the alienation of certain kinds of property; and that a fifth class had derived its provision from general assessments of real and personal estate. These, with duties on imports and exports, from which they are excluded, and poll taxes, which are the scourge of any society, comprise all the important branches of re-

venue. Suppose, as would have been the case if fair provisions had been made, that in each case the taxes had been carried as far as could be done without oppression or overburthening the object or the person, what would have been the situation of the General Government in case the breaking out of a war had called for great resources?

In all but direct taxes the Constitution enjoins *uniformity*. Reason and principle enjoin it with respect to all taxes laid by the same government upon the same society. What was to be done? Revenue could not be had from excises, because the principal objects were already burthened by certain States as much as they could conveniently bear and to lay additional burthens would be equally ruinous to industry and to persons. Indeed excessive accumulation prevents collection and defeats the end.

Similar reasons would be obstacles as to all the other great branches of revenue, because different States had previously occupied them all to the convenient extent. The hand of the General Government would thus have been arrested, and the greatest part of the resources of the community would have been tied up, incapable of being brought into action for the common exigencies of the nation.

Will it be said that the General Government might still have laid the taxes on such objects as appeared to it proper, leaving the States to change their ground and adopt others? Who would wish to have seen the necessity of so violent an expedient, or who could calculate the consequences of it?

Is it certain that a State would have thus com-

plaisantly changed a ground to which it had been led by the coincidence of its predilections and prejudices? If it had mortgaged the particular revenues for its debt, is it certain that it would have been able to change its ground justly and satisfactorily? Is it not too probable that perseverance, complaint, controversy, between the general head and the members, dissatisfaction in the community, and weakness of measures would have been the effects of such an experiment?

No one can doubt the dangers and inconveniences of such a situation. No sound mind but must think it a great recommendation of a measure that it tended to obviate so perilous and so inauspicious a situation.

An inference has been drawn that without the assumption and with separate provisions for the State debts, the chief part of the resources of the community would have been tied up, incapable of being brought into action for the public necessities. Let this be still more particularly illustrated.

Suppose Massachusetts had provided for her particular debt by excises. It is certain from the magnitude of her debt that to make the provision adequate in this way would have required excises to be extended as far as was practicable. Suppose Connecticut to have provided for her debt by stamp duties and duties on alienations of property, which carried to any extent not oppressive would not have been more than an adequate fund for her debt. Suppose South Carolina to have rested her debt on taxes and assessments upon real and personal estate, which

in any admissible extent would probably have been inadequate to her debt.[1]

It would follow that the United States could not touch either of those great branches of taxation, because they had been preoccupied in those three States as far as the subject in each case would permit, and therefore additions would be insupportable to the citizens and incapable of collection, and because Congress could not, by the Constitution or upon principle, touch those branches in some States without extending it to all.

The only palliative for this paralytic state of things was requisitions upon the States to be raised in their own way. No man conversant with the effects of this system during the war of our Revolution, who saw its impotent and unequal operation, who is a friend to vigor in the government of his country, who has an enlightened desire to see it in a state to vindicate efficaciously its honor and interests, who

[1] It may be said that the occupation of the several branches of revenue in the way which has been stated is merely suppositious! It might not have happened—a more partial and at the same time a more various distribution might have left a freer stage to the United States. The possibility of what has been stated in theory is a conclusive argument for preferring a plan which avoided it. But more than this, it is probable, and from circumstances was in a great degree unavoidable that what has been supposed should have been substantially realized in practice. The modes of taxation in particular States and the magnitude of their debts would have naturally led to it. And as far as the States, in their provisions, had recourse to different objects, though not to the full extent, so far the evil would have existed and would have been an obstacle to a due provision for the public necessities. But besides this, it would be impossible to the State Governments to command efficaciously one principal source of taxation, that of *excises*, because of the competition of industry where they were not laid.

wishes the reign of equal justice by equal effort among the States and their citizens—no such man but would deplore that this system should ever be again the principal reliance of the National Government.

But it might be expected to be even more impotent under the present government than under the Confederation. There the system of requisitions had a constitutional basis. Requisitions were the mode indicated by the Articles of Confederation for supplying the general treasury, and it was natural that their obligations should be so much the more respected.

But under the present government there is no authority for obtaining revenue in that way. A contrary supposition has crept in from that provision of the Constitution which regulates that "*direct taxes* shall be apportioned among the States according to their respective numbers." But the true meaning of this is, that when Congress are about to raise revenue by their own authority upon those objects which are contemplated as the objects of direct taxation, the proportional measure of the quantum of the tax to be levied in each State must be on the numbers of such State. It is a mere rule for the exercise of the general power of taxation vested in Congress as to the article of direct taxes.

It does not authorize the calling upon a State to raise such a quota of money by its own authority and in its own way. This would be to change taxation by Congress into taxation by the States—*direct* taxes into taxes of any other description which it might appear advisable to a State to substitute.

Requisitions are, then, unknown to our present Constitution. They would amount, therefore, to mere recommendations, a compliance with which would be purely gratuitous and voluntary in theory as well as in fact. What could be expected from such a system?

This position alone condemns any plan which would or might have left the United States dependent on the resource of requisitions for carrying on a war. It is against every principle of sound reasoning or constitutional or practical policy, to leave the administration in a condition to depend not on legal and obligatory provisions, but on such as are gratuitous and voluntary. This is to arbitrate, not to govern.

Perhaps the force of these reasonings may be thought to be diminished by the reflection that the debts of the States were temporary impediments which might be expected to cease within a certain period.

But who would say when they would cease? It was certain that if fairly provided for the evil would have lasted a very considerable time, and it was uncertain how soon a war might render it embarrassing to the finances and dangerous to the safety of the country.

The certain length of duration and the greatness of the probable mischief were sufficient reasons for removing the cause when it could so well be done.

It will be argued hereafter that the duration of all the debts, both general and particular, supposing a fair provision, was likely to have been much

greater on the plan of separate than on that of joint provision.

It was observed by way of objection to the assumption of the State debts, that the division of the business would facilitate a provision for the whole debt of the country, general and particular; that the resource of imposts would alone enable Congress to provide for the general debt, while the States separately could more conveniently employ other resources for the particular debts, and that together they could not only better provide for the interest of the debt but for the speedy extinguishment of the principal. This was, in truth, the most plausible argument which was used against the assumption.

In some of its aspects it was not without foundation, and in contemplating the plan to be proposed did not escape very serious reflection and examination.

It appeared to me well founded in this important view: that leaving a provision for the general debt within the compass of duties on imports, and disembarrassing Congress from the necessity of resorting to other and less agreeable modes of taxation, it avoided exposing the government in its infancy, and before it had engaged in its favor habit and opinion to the clamor and unpopularity which was to be feared from the resort to other means. To avoid this inconvenience had many charms for the person who was to propose a plan; it seemed to have much less risk for his reputation and quiet.

But on full and mature reflection, I yielded without reserve to the conviction that the consideration just mentioned, though not without weight, was greatly

outweighed by many other considerations, and that in a personal view it would have been pusillanimity and weakness to have stopped short of a provision for the aggregate debt of the country.

Some of the reasons which determined me have been anticipated:

1. The superior probability of justice among the States and among the individuals composing them, including a greater certainty of relief to the overburthened States and their citizens, and the advantage of equalizing the condition of the citizens of all the States as to contributions, which was incident to the plan of a joint provision.

2. The avoiding of the collisions, heart-burnings, and bickerings to which fifteen different and comprehensive systems of finance connected with a separate provision for the State debts was subject.

3. To leave the field of revenue more open to the United States, and thus secure to their government and the general exigencies of the Union, including defence and safety, a more full and complete command of the resources of the nation.

These considerations were of themselves sufficient to outweigh that which has been stated by way of objection, but I proceed to add others which concurred in determining my judgment.

The assumption would tend to consolidate and secure public credit.

This would happen from various causes.

If it had not taken place, there would have been a conflict of interests and feelings among the public creditors.

The creditors of certain States, from the impracticality, admitting a disposition, of making for them a provision equal to that which was made for the creditors of the United States, would naturally have felt jealousy and dissatisfaction. They would have considered it as unjust that their claims, equally meritorious, should be worse treated, and the sensibility in certain cases would have been aggravated by the reflection that the most productive resources, before exclusively enjoyed by the State Government and applied to their benefit, had been devoted to the General Government, and applied by it to the sole benefit of the national creditors.

This jealousy and dissatisfaction would have augmented the mass of dissatisfaction from other causes which would exist against an adequate provision for the general debt. The sources of such dissatisfaction have been stated, and it was certain that enmity to the government in some and the spirit of faction in others would make them engines for agitating the public mind. Such dissatisfactions in a popular government especially tend to jeopardize the security of the public creditors, and, consequently, of the public credit.

The assumption, by uniting the interests of public creditors of all descriptions, was calculated to produce an opposite effect. It brought into the field an anxiety to fortify the public opinion in opposition to the efforts of faction and of the *anti-proprietary* spirit, in favor of a just and reasonable provision for the debt and for the support of credit.

These considerations, to a mind which has been

attentive to the progress of things since, will have very particular weight.

The assumption would favor public credit in another sense, by promoting and enabling a more adequate provision for the entire debt of the country. This is in direct contradiction to one of the positions which the objection that was last stated contains. These are the reasons for a contrary opinion.

Some States—especially Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, South Carolina, and Georgia—could not have made adequate provision for their respective debts. There is the ground of experience to assert that some States were not disposed to do it. From the co-operation of the two causes, the debts of a large majority of the States would have remained without an adequate provision, and would have been in danger of being frittered away by means inconsistent with the spirit of public credit; while the United States, by assuming the State debts, and by laying open all the resources of taxation to the command of the General Government upon a uniform plan, could, for reasons already detailed, make a more efficacious and complete provision for every part of the debt than could possibly have been done by separate provisions.

This may seem to have been a matter of no concern to the General Government. But the cause of credit and property is one and the same throughout the States. A blow to it, in whatever State or in whatever form, is a blow to it in every State and in every form. The intimacy of interest and connection between the States leads to an observance in one

of what passes in another. Bad precedents influence as well as good. They are greedily looked up to and cited by men of loose principles who make them instruments of instilling doctrines and feelings hostile to morals, property, and credit. It may be averred as a maxim, without danger of material error, that there cannot be a violation of public principle in any State without spreading more or less an evil contagion in all.

It is known that the relaxed conduct of the State Governments in regard to property and credit was one of the most serious diseases under which the body politic labored prior to the adoption of our present Constitution, and was a material cause of that state of public opinion which led to its adoption.

The Constitution of the United States contained guards against this evil. Its provisions inhibit to the State Governments the power to make any thing but gold and silver coin a tender in payment of debts, or to pass any law impairing the obligation of contracts, which had been great engines of violating property, destroying confidence and credit, and propagating public dishonor and private distress.

In the practice of the Federal Government it was wise to second the spirit of those provisions: 1, by avoiding examples of those very practices which were meant to be guarded against in the States; 2, by removing, as far as it could be constitutionally done, out of the way of the States, whatever would oblige or tempt to further tampering with faith, credit, and property.

The assumption was calculated to do this, and it

is not one of its least merits. It has served to prevent the reiteration of examples from necessity or choice which could not but have a malignant aspect towards the cause of public credit.

It might be added that the national character abroad has been rescued from stains by the same measure. It was not easy for foreigners to distinguish accurately between the infractions of credit by the State Governments and by the General. More or less it was natural that some confusion of ideas should prevail, and that the character of the country at large should suffer from the crookedness of parts.

Another beneficial effect of the assumption favorable to public credit was the placing of all the public funds of the country upon the same foundation. The price and steadiness or instability of the public funds are the barometers of public credit, and, with due allowance for temporary circumstances, they mark and establish the state of public credit.

It cannot be doubted by a man acquainted with the subject, that the fluctuations, instability, and precariousness of the value of property in funds in this country would have been very much in a ratio to the variety of kinds and of the foundations on which they rested; that it would have been incomparably greater upon the plan of fifteen different provisions at different rates by different authorities upon different principles, than upon that of one provision upon one principle by one authority. It is observable in the European markets that the principles of the different species of funds afloat influence each other, though perhaps the causes that

affect some ought either not to affect others, or to affect them differently. Few of the many who deal habitually, or occasionally, in the funds are able to appreciate accurately the causes of fluctuations and what ought to have been the consequences. The knowing ones take advantage of the facts, and turn it to their own advantage, commonly to the disadvantage of the less knowing and to the injury of public credit.

A great mass of precarious funds in the shape of State debts could not have failed to injure and keep down the funds of the General Government by the influence of appearances, by the quick and sudden diversion of money from one channel to another, by the manœuvres of speculation, by the distraction of public opinion.

There are some who reason so much *a travers* as to regard a low state of the funds as desirable, because, say they, it enables the government to sink the debt more speedily by purchases.

But they forget that the lowness of the funds is an argument of a bad state of credit, and that the nation loses more by the greater purchases of foreigners at low prices than it gains by its own purchases at those prices, and the government loses infinitely more by the higher premiums and interests which it must in that case give for new loans than it can gain in purchases of the bonds given for old loans at low prices. Let it be remembered that a bond given last year is as good as a bond given to-day; that borrowing by the government is in fact only sending its bonds to market, and if its old bonds are low its new

bonds cannot be high. What would be thought of the policy of a merchant who should wish to see his notes at ten shillings in the pound?

Much clamor has been raised against the funding system on the score of *speculation*, how justly will be examined in the proper place, but what would have been the degree of it on the plan of so many different funds or stocks depending on so many different provisions? It is evident that it would have been multiplied tenfold. The legerdemain of speculation would have had full scope for its exertion. To give as quickly as possible elevation and stability to the funds was a most important means of raising and fixing public credit. The assumption, by equalizing the condition of every part of the public debt, and placing every part on good and on equal security, was one of the most effectual expedients for that purpose.

Another consequence of the assumption, contrary to what has been supposed, and favorable to public credit, is that it facilitated a speedy and honorable extinguishment of the debt.

This results from the superior efficacy of unity in the financial system; the superior and better command of the national resources, as well from the reason assigned as from the probability of greater skill and order in the arrangements of the General than the State Governments.

That plan which gave a more systematic and thorough command of every branch of national resources was evidently better adapted not only to the effectual payment of interest, but to the speedy

honorable discharge of principal, for the very reason that greater resources could be brought into action.[1]

Certain States would have had to struggle endlessly with their debts—happy to be able to face even the interest. But the General Government was able to make and has already made a joint provision which would with due dispatch absorb the whole debt.

Besides the advantages to public safety and public credit, consequences very favorable to the ease and satisfaction of individuals were included in the assumption, of three kinds: 1. Lightening the burthens absolutely of all the citizens of the United States. 2. Equalizing their condition as to burthens of the citizens of one State with those of another. 3. Bringing certain relief in the first instance to the over-indebted States, and facilitating settlement of accounts. These are the incidents of the same superiority of faculty in the General Government to make a convenient provision for the whole debt.

It is a curious fact which has not made its due impression, that in every State the people have found relief from assumption, while an incomparably better provision than before existed has been made for the State debts.

[1] I have annexed the epithet *honorable* to that of speedy, because certainly a more speedy extinguishment could have been found in bankruptcy and fraud. There is too much cause to believe that those who favored the intricate speckled system of State provisions secretly had an eye to this happy resource. Its evils in every sense have been delineated, and no one who values his character will avow it. No sound politician will look with complacency toward it. It was of the justice and policy of the United States to expel this corruption from the body politic.

Let the citizens of Virginia be appealed to whether they have not, in consequence of being exonerated from the necessity of providing for their debt, been relieved in degree, or kind from burthens which before pressed heavily upon them. They must answer in the affirmative. The same inquiry will find the same answer in every State. Men wonder at the lightness of these burthens, and yet at the capacity of the government to pay the interest of the debt, to absorb a portion of the principal, and to find extensive resources for defence against Indian ravages.

The solution of the enigma is in the present financial system of the country, intrinsically more energetic, more orderly, better directed, and more uniform and comprehensive than could possibly have been the case with fifteen different systems to provide for as many different loads of debt.

The effect of energy and system is to vulgar and feeble minds a kind of magic which they do not comprehend, and thus they make false interpretation of the most obvious facts. The people of several parts of the State, relieved and happy by the effects of the assumption, execrate the measure and its authors, to which they owe the blessing.

The equalizing the condition of the individual citizens of the several States by the generalizing of the provision, is connected with this part of the subject. It has been already noticed in reference to the justice of procedures. It deserves particular attention in the view of policy.

It is impossible to imagine any thing more calculated to breed discontent, and, between the citizens

of the United States, mutual jealousy and animosity, than the inequality of conditions, which, without the assumption, would have existed.

When the citizens of Massachusetts or Connecticut bordering on New York felt themselves burdened with heavy taxes, while their neighbors of New York paid scarcely any, what must have been their sensations? How must they have been stung by the sense of so unjust an inequality? How must their envy and dissatisfaction have been excited? How must this have tended to beget in them discontent with the government under which they lived, and, from discontent, to lead them to revolt?

Something of this actually took place. That spirit of dissatisfaction which produced the insurrection in Massachusetts was in all probability promoted by a comparison which exhibited the people of that State as in a condition far worse than their neighbors.

If it be said that this effect was likely to be temporary, destined to cease upon a settlement of accounts which would bring relief to the overburdened States, then the remark before made recurs. A settlement at all was precarious and uncertain; whether it would bring relief even where it ought to, was still more precarious and uncertain.

Let us conceive what would have been the effect under the inequality of conditions which has been stated, either if a settlement had been long procrastinated, or if, having been made, it did not bring relief to the much-indebted States.

What would then have been the situation of the public mind in those States? Who can calculate the

mischiefs which would have attended the disappointment or despair of relief and the prospect of continuing indefinitely under such unequal loads?

It is a great recommendation of the assumption, not only that it anticipated a relief which was indispensable and which might not have come from a settlement, but that it facilitated a settlement and rendered a tolerable issue far more probable.

This position is thus explained:

The circumstances which have been enumerated rendered a settlement upon strict or systematic principles impracticable. Had the State debts remained unassumed, the nature of the settlement which might be made was proportionately important, and imposed on the commissioners the duty of greater rigor and exactness. The more this was the case, the more difficult it was to come to any admissible or satisfactory result. Adherence to principles was likely on one side or another to produce greater mischief. Compromise and management were essential.

The assumption of the State debts, by giving relief to the much indebted States, rendered the issue, and, consequently, the principles of the settlement, less important. It allowed greater latitude to the commissioners to deviate from rule, to consult expediency, to shape the result by a spirit of accommodation and concession to circumstances. Hence, a settlement became more practicable in proportion as it was less important.

I declare that I am not in the secret of the principles or maxims by which the commissioners were governed, but from what I do know of the state of

things, with a full conviction of there being as much disposition on their part of doing as much justice as possible, I can entertain no doubt that the settlement which they made was essentially artificial and the result of a thousand compromises of principle. No other settlement was possible, and I believe none could ever have been made, had not things been put upon a footing to enfetter the commissioners.

Thus, then, it is one of the merits of the assumption, that it facilitated a settlement of accounts which all the States were desirous of, and so has contributed to establish their harmony. And it is fortunate that it has so issued as to have produced relief to those States which, notwithstanding the assumption, were still left with considerable debts upon them.

This circumstance of there having remained such balances [1] may be urged as an objection to the reasonings in favor of the assumption. But, to this, two things are to be replied:

1. That my proposition to Congress embraced the entire debt of the State, which would have given in the first instance complete relief. The limitation by Congress is not chargeable on my plan. It was the effect of a compromise between the zealous friends of assumption and some who opposed or doubted, and was dictated in some degree by a spirit of caution.

But though by this limitation the relief was less complete in the first instance than was intended by my plan, enough was done to obviate the principal

[1] When the Assumption Act was carried out by the commissioners considerable balances remained, owing to Congress having allowed a State term which could not be overstepped.

mischiefs, and to ensure that a State could not be oppressed by the peculiar burthen remaining upon it.

2. Another advantage incident to the assumption was the preventing the depopulation of particular States.

Had the overburdened States remained so any considerable time while the citizens of other States were lightly taxed, it could not but have promoted extremely emigration from the more to the less burdened States. This dislocation of population from any violent cause or any extraordinary pressure on parts of the Union cannot but be regarded as a serious evil. It could not but disturb in some degree the general order, the due course of industry, the due circulation of public benefits.

One particular inconvenience would have been to have increased the inability and distress of the overburdened States by lessening the population, from the labor of which the public resources were to be derived.

Another particular inconvenience might have been the transferring the population of the country from more to less beneficial situations in a national sense. No one has been more uniformly nor more entirely than myself in favor of the system of giving a free course to the population and settlement of our interior country, and of securing to it by the best efforts of the government the enjoyment of those collateral advantages on which its prosperity must depend. This, in my opinion, is preferable as the most natural policy, and as that which will best secure and cement

the unity of the empire. But with this policy adopted in my most unqualified manner, I am far from regarding it as wise to give any extraordinary occasion or impulse to a transfer of people from the settled to the unsettled parts of the country. This is to retard the progress in general improvement, and to impair for a greater length of time the vigor of the nation, by scattering too widely and sparsely the elements of resource and strength. It is to weaken government by enlarging too rapidly the sphere of its action, and the Union by stretching out the links of connection between the different parts.

The true politician will content himself by seeing new settlements formed by the current of a redundant population; he will submit, because it is unnatural, and would be fruitless and unwise, to oppose even a greater transfer than the mere surplus, by the attractions to emigration which new countries hold out; he will seek to tie the emigrants to the friends and brethren they leave, by a kind and liberal conduct of the government towards them, by efficacious protection, and by sincere, persevering, and energetic endeavors to obtain for them the free and full enjoyment of those rights and advantages which local situation requires. But he will not accelerate this transfer by accumulating artificial disadvantages on the already settled parts of the country; he will even endeavor to avoid this by removing such disadvantages if casual causes have produced them.

Such without reserve is my sincere view of this subject, and I deem it no small recommendation of the assumption that it was a mild and equitable

expedient for preventing a violent dislocation of the population of particular States.

It remains to mention one consideration which naturally occurred in the reflections upon the expediency of assuming the State debts.

This is its tendency to strengthen our infant government by increasing the number of ligaments between the government and the interests of individuals.

I frankly acknowledge that this tendency as far as it appeared to be founded was not excluded from the calculation, for my opinion has been and is that the true danger to our prosperity is not the overbearing strength of the Federal head but its weakness and imbecility for preserving the union of the States and controlling the eccentricities of State ambition and the explosion of factious passions. And a measure which consistently with the Constitution was likely to have the effect of strengthening the fabric would have recommended itself to me on that account.

But though this was the case; though I thought, too, that the assumption would have in several senses a temporary tendency of the kind alluded to, and so far might serve as a prop to the government in the infancy of its authority, while there was yet a numerous party alive whose vanity and envy pledged them to opposition, and before it had acquired the confirmations of habit and age, and though weight was given to the argument where it was thought most likely to have effect, yet upon the whole it was the consideration upon which I relied least of all.

It appeared to me in a considerable degree counterbalanced by the suggestion of an objection which has been stated, the necessity which it imposed on the government of resorting early to unpalatable modes of taxation which jeopardized its popularity and gave a handle to its enemies to attack it. It appeared to me also entitled to the less weight, because, on the supposition that the debt was to be extinguished within a moderate term of years, its influence must then be terminated, and it had not pretensions to be considered as a permanent or lasting prop to the government.

Besides that, it was to be foreseen that successive transfers of considerable portions of the debt to foreigners and accumulations at home would rapidly enough lessen the number of ligaments, diminish the influence upon individuals, and, the taxes continuing, perhaps invert the effect.

Had this, then, been the weightiest motive to the measure, it would never have received my patronage. The great inducements with me were those which have been previously enumerated, and chiefly the growing simplicity and energy to the national finances, the avoiding the collisions of multifarious and conflicting systems, the securing to the government for national exigencies the complete command of the national resources, the consolidation of public credit. These were the commanding motives, and it is believed they were solid.

It is understood that a contrary course has been a principal cause of embarrassment in the United Netherlands. The separate debts of the different

provinces have been an endless source of perplexity and financial imbecility.

But for the same reason that the effect of the assumption to strengthen the government was a feeble or ambiguous motive, its importance as an objection, in the views of those who fear the overbearing power of the General Government, has been much exaggerated. What solid ground was there for all the declamation which has represented this measure as a premeditated plan for overthrowing the State Governments and consolidating the States into one? What room was there, in a matter of so temporary and partial an operation, for the dreadful alarms which were felt or affected?

The inconvenience of an early resort to modes of taxation which run counter to public prejudices, has been mentioned. Its force was felt; but then, in addition to the reasons immediately connected with the measure,—which led to it, there were collateral ones which united to meet it.

The current of popularity immediately after the adoption of the government ran strongly in its favor. The immediate Chief Magistrate justly united in his person the full confidence and cordial regard of the nation.

It was not to be doubted that intrigues to unpopularize the government would go on—that the passions incident to faction, the natural disease of popular governments, would grow and multiply—that the rivalships of power would increase. And it was to be feared that greater difficulties might exist at a future day to introduce the most difficult species of

revenues, however necessary they might be in the then stage of our affairs. The delay in establishing them might even be construed into an implied condemnation of them, and might be rendered an argument against their future introduction. Even negative precedents in such cases are not without force. While the advantages of present situation facilitated the introduction of these revenues at the time, the obstacles that might be afterwards created rendered it advisable to occupy the ground, and to avoid, by anticipating, difficulties. The presidency of the actual Chief Magistrate was a more favorable period than was likely in a short time to recur to establish points favorable to the just and necessary efficiency of the government.

Besides that, it would probably have been in the long run an unwise calculation, even of popularity, for the government to have omitted the measure of assumption. A weak and embarrassed government never fails to be unpopular. It attaches to itself the disrespect incident to weakness, and, unable to promote the public happiness, its impotencies are its crimes. Without the assumption, the government would have been for a long time at least under all the entanglements and imbecilities of a complicated clashing and disordered system of finance.

The foregoing considerations appeared to me decisive for proposing an assumption of the State debts. Experience has not led me to repent the measure, and I believe it will more and more recommend itself even to its enemies.

In the course of the remarks which have been made,

the considerations which combated the mode of proceeding with regard to assumption—namely, an entire assumption of the State debts and a dereliction of the settlement of accounts, have been anticipated. The state of public opinion was an insuperable obstacle. Almost every State flattered itself with being a creditor, and imagined a particular interest in a settlement. The renunciation of it would consequently have destroyed the confidence and disturbed the harmony of the States, else it would undoubtedly have been the best policy and as good justice to have renounced it. There was no ground of procedure more likely to promote mutual justice and convenience, than to assume as a principle that each State in the war had exerted itself to the extent of its faculties, that the subsisting debts were to be paid out of a common treasury, and that all retrospection and reliquidation between the States were to be abandoned. But this great and liberal measure was impossible. All parties accordingly concurred in demanding a settlement.

The course of the argument has stated and replied to all the objections to the assumption except one. This is that it has tended to increase the mass of the debt.

This observation has frequently been so managed as to infuse into the minds of many, a vague, confused conception that the PUBLIC debt of the country has been augmented in mass to the extent of the aggregate sum of State debts assumed. But it were absurd to attempt a refutation of this idea. It is self-evident that the assumption in this respect did

nothing more than transfer the particular debts to the Union. It united fourteen sums in one, and charged them upon one responsibility, that of the Union, instead of leaving them to exist separately, chargeable on the separate responsibilities of the Union and the individual States. The debt of the Union was increased, but the debts of the several members of it were proportionably decreased. The MASS of PUBLIC DEBT consequently remained the same, on the infallible evidence of a mathematical axiom that a WHOLE cannot be greater than ITS PARTS.

But the objection has had a more particular signification. It has amounted to this, that the debts of the States have been twice provided for, once to the individual creditors who held evidences of State debts, and once to the States in whose favor balances were found at the settlement. This objection, like most others from the same quarter, has been presented in a shape so general, inexplicit, and naked of explanation, that it is not easy even to comprehend, much less to answer it. It probably turns on a sophism or error which supposes the same item of service or supply twice represented, once in the evidence or voucher given by the State to the person who served or supplied, and once in the account of the State as a charge against the United States.

But this supposition of double representation overlooks the material fact that by the plan of settlement according to the assumption the sums assumed by the United States to individuals are charged to the State which incurred them, and so balance and extinguish

the correlative charge for the service or supply which was the origin of the debt.

Moreover, it is manifest in point of result that the objection can have little if any foundation.[1]

[1] The conclusion of this paper is lacking. All that remains unprinted is an imperfect outline of a proof, by figures, of the proposition that no part of the debt was paid twice.

PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE

Note.—A few words of explanation only are needed in addition to what has already been said in the preface to this edition as to the private correspondence. The letters are all from Hamilton, and, being arranged chronologically, constitute to a certain extent an autobiography. They may be divided into three classes: those which were printed in the edition of 1850; those which have been printed elsewhere and were not included in that edition; and those which are now printed for the first time from the original manuscripts. The letters in the edition of 1850, except in the few cases where the original has been lost, have all been carefully collated, thanks to the untiring kindness of Mr. Dwight, who was at that time the librarian of the State Department, with the originals in the Hamilton papers. As first published, they abounded in errors, for the most part verbal, but sometimes more serious. These errors have been corrected, and the text is now believed to be correct. The letters now first printed have been drawn from many sources and have all been carefully transcribed and collated. Those which have been printed elsewhere than in the edition of 1850 have been collated with the originals so far as it could be done. Unfortunately this was impossible in some instances, and particularly in the case of several letters which are to be found only in J. C. Hamilton's *History of the Republic*. Every effort has been made to secure all the Hamilton letters extant, not only by private research, but by public advertisement, and the editor believes that comparatively few letters of any importance have escaped him. Every letter of the slightest historical value which has come under the notice of the editor is given in full in the following pages, and all letters devoid of historical or personal interest have been scrupulously excluded. The source of every letter given here is indicated, except in the case of those reprinted from the edition of 1850. The notes are intended merely to explain the object of the letter when it is obscure, or to identify the persons to whom the letters are addressed or who are mentioned incidentally by the writer.

PRIVATE CORRESPONDENCE

TO EDWARD STEVENS[1]

St. Croix, Nov. 11, 1769.

THIS just serves to acknowledge receipt of yours per Capt. Lowndes, which was delivered me yesterday. The truth of Capt. Lightbowen and Lowndes' information is now verified by the presence of your father and sister, for whose safe arrival I pray; and that they may convey that satisfaction to your soul that must naturally flow from the sight of absent friends in health; and shall, for news this way, refer you to them. As to what you say respecting your having soon the happiness of seeing us all, I wish for an accomplishment of your hopes, provided they are concomitant with your welfare; otherwise not; though I doubt whether I shall be present or not, for, to confess my weakness, Ned, my ambition is prevalent, so that I contemn the grovelling condition of a clerk or the like, to which my fortune, etc., condemns me, and would willingly risk my life, though not my character, to exalt my station. I am confident, Ned, that my youth excludes me from any

[1] Edward Stevens, the friend of Hamilton's boyhood, was the son of Mr. Stevens, a West India planter and merchant. Hamilton's relations with the Stevens family were very intimate, and young Stevens accompanied him to this country where they both were educated.

hopes of immediate preferment; nor do I desire it; but I mean to prepare the way for futurity. I 'm no philosopher, you see, and may justly be said to build castles in the air; my folly makes me ashamed, and I beg you 'll conceal it; yet, Neddy, we have seen such schemes successful when the projector is constant. I shall conclude saying, I wish there was a war.

P. S.—I this morning received yours by William Smith, and am pleased to see you give such close application to study.

TO TILEMAN CRUGER [1]

St. Croix, Nov. 16, 1771.

In behalf of Mr. Nicholas Cruger [2] (who, by reason of a very ill state of health, went from this to New York, the 15th ult.), I have the pleasure to address you by the long-expected sloop *Thunderbolt*, Capt. William Newton, owned by Messrs. Jacob Walton, John Harris, and Nicholas Cruger, the latter of whom has written you fully concerning her destination, which I need not repeat. She has on board besides a parcel of lumber for yourself, sundry articles on account of her owners as per inclosed bill of lading; and when you have disposed of them, you will please to credit each partner for one third of the proceeds.

Mr. N. Cruger's proportion of this, and the balance

[1] This letter is one of a number of similar letters written by Hamilton while a clerk in Mr. Cruger's counting-room. It is given merely as a specimen of his business correspondence which was certainly remarkable for a boy of fourteen.

[2] The gentleman in whose office Hamilton was employed.

of your account hitherto, will more than pay for his one third cost of her first cargo up; and for the other two, I shall endeavor to place value in your hands betimes. I only wish for a line from you to know what will best answer.

Reports here represent matters in a very disagreeable light, with regard to the Guarda Costas, which are said to swarm upon the coast; but as you will be the best judge of what danger there might be, all is submitted to your prudent direction.

Capt. Newton must arm with you, as he could not so conveniently do it here. Give me leave to hint to you that you cannot be too particular in your instructions to him. I think he seems to want experience in such voyages. Messrs. Walton and John H. Cruger are to furnish you themselves with their respective proportion of the cost of the several cargoes.

The staves on board, if by any means convenient, I beg may be returned by the sloop; they will command a good price here, and I suppose little or nothing with you; could they be got at I would not send them down, but they are stowed promiscuously among other things.

If convenient, please to deliver the hogsheads, now containing the Indian meal, to the captain as water casks, and others should he want them. I supplied him with twenty here. I must beg your reference to Mr. Cruger's last letter of the 2d ult. for other particulars.

Our crop will be very early, so that the utmost dispatch is necessary to import three cargoes of mules in due time.

TO THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS OF NEW YORK [1]

NEW YORK, May 26, 1776.

GENTLEMEN:

I take the liberty to request your attention to a few particulars, which will be of considerable importance to the future progress of the company under my command: and I shall be much obliged to you for as speedy a determination concerning them as you can conveniently give. The most material is respecting the pay. Our company, by their articles, are to be subject to the same regulations, and to receive the same pay, as the Continental Artillery. Hitherto I have conformed to the standard laid down in the Journal of the Congress, published the 10th May, 1775; but I am well informed that, by some later regulation, the pay of the Artillery has been augmented, and now stands according to the following rates: Captain, £10. 13. 4. Captain-Lieutenant, £8. Lieutenants, each, £7. 6. 8. Sergeants, £3. 6. 8. Corporals, £3. 1. 4. Bombardiers, £3. 1. 4. Gunners, £3. Matrosses, £2. 17. 4. Drummers and Fifers, £3. By comparing these with my pay-rolls, you will discover a considerable difference; and I doubt not you will be easily sensible that such a difference should not exist.

I am not personally interested in having an augmentation agreeably to the above rates, because my own pay will remain the same as that it now is: but I make this application on behalf of the company; as I am fully convinced such a disadvantageous distinc-

[1] Hamilton was at this time captain of an artillery company of the New York troops.

tion will have a very pernicious effect on the minds and behavior of the men. They do the same duty with the other companies, and think themselves entitled to the same pay. They have been already comparing accounts; and many marks of discontent have lately appeared on this score. As to the circumstance of our being confined to the defence of the colony, it will have little or no weight; for there are but few in the company, who would not as willingly leave the colony on any necessary expedition, as stay in it: and they will not, therefore, think it reasonable to have their pay curtailed on such a consideration. Captain Beauman, I understand, enlists all his men on the above terms; and this makes it difficult for me to get a single recruit: for men will naturally go to those who pay them best. On this account, I should wish to be immediately authorized to offer the same pay to all who may be inclined to enlist. The next thing I should wish to know, is, whether I must be allowed my *actual expenses* that might attend the enlistment of men, should I send into the country for that purpose. The expense would not be great; and it would enable me to complete my company at once, and bring it the sooner into proper order and discipline.

Also, I should be glad to be informed if my company is to be allowed the frock which is given to the other troops as a bounty. This frock would be extremely serviceable in summer, while the men are on fatigue; and would put it in their power to save their uniform much longer. I am, gentlemen, with the greatest respect, etc.

TO THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS

July 26, 1776.

GENTLEMEN:

I am obliged to trouble you to remove a difficulty which arises respecting the quantity of subsistence which is to be allowed my men. Inclosed you have the rates of rations, which is the standard allowance of the whole Continental, and even the provincial, army; but it seems Mr. Curtenius cannot afford to supply us with more than his contract stipulates; which, by comparison, you will perceive is considerably less than the forementioned rate.

My men, you are sensible, are, by their articles, entitled to the same subsistence with the Continental troops and it would be to them an insupportable discrimination, as well as a breach of the terms of their enlistment, to give them almost a third less provisions than the whole army besides receives. I doubt not you will readily put this matter upon a proper footing.

Hitherto we have drawn our full allowance from Mr. Curtenius; but he did it upon the supposition that he would have a farther consideration for the extraordinary supply.

At present, however, he scruples to proceed in the same way, till it can be put upon a more certain foundation. I am, gentlemen, etc.

TO THE HONORABLE CONVENTION OF NEW YORK

NEW YORK, August, 1776.

It is necessary I should inform you that there is at present a vacancy in my company, arising from the promotion of Lieut. Johnson to a captaincy in one

of the new Gallies (which command, however, he has since resigned for a very particular reason). As artillery officers are scarce in proportion to the call for them, and as myself and my remaining officers sustain an extraordinary weight of duty on account of the present vacancy, I shall esteem it a favor, if you will be pleased, as soon as possible, to make up my deficiency by a new appointment. It would be productive of much inconvenience should not the inferior officers succeed in course, and from this consideration I doubt not you will think it proper to advance Mr. Gilleland and Mr. Bean, and fill up the third lieutenancy with some other person. I would beg the liberty *warmly* to recommend to your attention Thomas Thompson,—now first sergeant in my company,—a man highly deserving of notice and preferment. He has discharged his duty in his present station with uncommon fidelity, assiduity, and expertness. He is a very good disciplinarian—possesses the advantage of having seen a good deal of service in Germany, has a tolerable share of common sense, and will not disgrace the rank of an officer and gentleman. In a word, I verily believe he will make an excellent lieutenant, and his advancement will be a great encouragement and benefit to my company in particular, and will be an animating example to all men of merit to whose knowledge it comes. Myself and my officers will be much obliged to the Hon. the Convention to favor us with our commissions with all convenient speed, as they may be highly requisite under some circumstances that may possibly hereafter arise.

TO THE PROVINCIAL CONGRESS

MORRISTOWN, March 6, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

It is necessary I should inform you of the changes which have happened in your company of artillery, which would have been done long ago, had I not been prevented by sickness, from which I am but lately recovered.

General Washington has been pleased to appoint me one of his aids-de-camp. Captain-Lieutenant James Moore, a promising officer, and who did credit to the State he belonged to, died about nine weeks ago. Lieutenant James Gilleland, some time before that resigned his commission, prompted by domestic inconveniences, and *other* motives best known to himself. There remain now only two officers, Lieutenants Bean and Thompson, and about thirty men. The reason that the number of men is so reduced, besides death and desertions, was owing to a breach of orders in Lieutenant Johnson, who first began the enlistment of the company, and who, instead of engaging them during the war, according to the intention of the State, engaged them for the limited term of a twelvemonth. The time of those enlisted by him has expired, and for want of power to re-engage them they have mostly entered into other corps.

I have to request you will favor me with instructions as to your future intentions. If you design to retain the company on the particular establishment of the State, it will be requisite to complete the number of officers, and make provision to have the company filled by a new enlistment. In this case, I

should beg leave to recommend to your notice, as far as a captain-lieutenancy, Mr. Thompson. Mr. Bean is so incurably addicted to a *certain failing*, that I cannot, in justice, give my opinion in favor of his preferment. But if you should determine to resign the company, as I expect you will, considering it as an extraordinary burthen without affording any special advantages, the Continent will readily take it off your hands so soon as you shall intimate your design to relinquish it. I doubt not you will see the propriety of speedily deciding on the matter, which the good of the service requires.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS, ROBERT LIVINGSTON, AND WILLIAM ALLISON, ESQS.[1]

March 20, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

With cheerfulness I embrace the proposal of corresponding with your convention through you, and shall from time to time, as far as my leisure will permit and my duty warrant, communicate such transactions as shall happen, such pieces of intelligence as shall be received, and such comments upon them as shall appear necessary to convey a true idea of what is going on in the military line. Let me caution you, however, that whatever opinions I shall give in the course of our correspondence are to be considered merely as my private sentiments, and are never to be interpreted as an echo of those of the

[1] These gentlemen formed a committee of the New York Convention.

General; since they will not be really so, and a construction of the kind may lead into errors and be productive of inconveniences.

The present season affords nothing of importance. There are, daily, little skirmishes arising from attempts of the enemy to forage; but which, though generally favorable to us, are attended with consequences so trifling and insignificant as to be scarcely worth mentioning. They are, indeed, of great service in the general scale, as they serve to harass and distress the enemy, and, by keeping them from forage, will put them under difficulties as to the transportation of their baggage and cannon whenever they shall think of making any capital movement. One thing worthy of notice is, that hardly a day passes without some deserter coming in. The fact itself, and the accounts they concurrently give, prove that the spirit of desertion runs high; and the reason assigned for it is, that many of the regiments have been a very long time without pay, and that the men are most barbarously treated if they only dare to lisp their discontent on the score of it.

'T is rumored that the Congress have received a letter from Dr. Franklin, by which he seems to be in such high spirits as to prognosticate a favorable disposition of affairs in the quarter where he is. I was just now also transiently told that he had been received in the public character of a plenipotentiary from the American States. When it receives confirmation, I will give it to you.

I shall observe your directions respecting a transference of the company lately mine to the Continental

establishment, and in my next shall communicate the result of my inquiry into the present state of your cannon. The General is now perfectly recovered, and, added to the pleasure of returning health, enjoys the solace of his lady's company, who has lately joined the army.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS, ETC.

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, March 22, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

Two days ago I accepted your challenge and met you for the first time in the epistolary field, since which I had the pleasure of receiving yours of the 19th instant, and, as far as circumstances will permit, close with your proposal of interchanging blows twice a week.

The present time is so unfruitful of events that it affords no intelligence worthy of your notice. As to transactions of a military nature, I can only say that the British army continues to decrease by the daily loss of prisoners and deserters taken at and coming into the different posts, which is a striking symptom that the situation of affairs with the enemy is not so favorable as it might be; for when an army is in good humor and its affairs prosperous, desertion is a disease that seldom prevails in it.

From all the accounts they have given us, seconded by considerations that obviously present themselves, it is my opinion the enemy will make no grand movement before the beginning of May, and perhaps not then. There is no expectation in their army of

their being speedily called to the field, nor the least disposition of matters that I have heard of for a sudden excursion. It will be a long time before the roads will be fit for the transportation of artillery, which is an essential instrument in their operations; and a still longer before the ground will permit of an encampment consistent with the health and comfort of the soldiers; and it would defeat their purpose to undertake any thing of importance under circumstances that would oblige them to divide their army in order to accommodate it. It seems also to be an opinion supported by the best reasons, that the main object with which they will open the campaign will be the capture of Philadelphia. If so, they will have a greater probability of success by co-operating both by sea and land; and the preparations for this, added to the dangers of making an attempt by water at too early a season, will in all likelihood protract the execution of their project at least till the time I have mentioned.

I intimated that it might perhaps be later before they would move. It seems to me a pretty general idea in their army, that they will wait for reinforcements before they take the field. Should they do this, I see not from what quarter they can expect any succors worth mentioning so early as the beginning of May. But I would lay no great stress upon this. Notwithstanding the idea is countenanced by their weakness in numbers, which must make their success more doubtful and expose them to greater hazards in whatever they attempt than can be agreeable where so much is at stake, much will depend, however, upon

the comparative strength of our army, and the conception they may form of it.

Though I do not doubt your discretion, which occasioned me so readily to embrace your proposal, yet such is the delicacy of my situation, that I must beg leave to repeat what I before observed to you, that whenever I give opinions they are merely my own, and will probably, so far from being a transcript of those of the General, differ widely from them in many respects. The one I now advance is of this kind, and is besides improper to be generally circulated; for many people who have the management of affairs are of so lethargic a complexion that they are to be kept in action only by the fear of immediate danger,—and should they get it into their heads that the enemy would remain idle for six weeks, would think they had a right to doze away forty days at least.

In my last I mentioned a rumor concerning Doctor Franklin; since that I have seen something said (and I believe it) to be an extract of a letter from him to Mr. Bache, of Philadelphia, in which he represents things to be in an excellent train in France, and uses this strong emphatical language, that a war between her and Britain "was as inevitable as death." No public advices from him that I know of have reached headquarters.

I spoke to General Knox about your cannon in the Continental service. He answered that it would be difficult to ascertain to what particular class the pieces that had been left belonged, but he considered the Continent at all times bound to make good the

number borrowed from your State; and that he had still your six pieces in his hands. I have always looked upon the matter in the same light.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE NEW YORK CONVENTION

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, April 5, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

Since my last I have had the pleasure of receiving your reply to my two favors of the 29th ultimo and 2d current. I am happy enough to be able to inform you that my indisposition, which was the occasion of my brevity when I last wrote, is now removed.

The opinion I advanced respecting the enemy's not moving before the beginning of May, seems to be shaken, though not entirely overthrown, by some present appearances. We have received information that they are embarking about three thousand men on board of transports, which are lying at the Hook, by way of Staten Island. This, it is conjectured, is with a view to the Delaware; and the supposition is confirmed by the circumstance of a confederacy lately detected at Philadelphia, who, among other things, were endeavoring, by the temptation of fifty pounds, to engage persons as pilots up that river. The extreme difficulties they must labor under for want of forage, and the infinite hazard they must run by moving with a small body of about five thousand men, with an enemy in the rear, incapable of sparing any considerable body of troops to form a post behind, and be an asylum to them in case of accident,—

these circumstances will hardly allow me to think they will be daring enough to make an attempt at this time. But on the other hand, as they know we are in a progressive state as to numbers, and other matters of importance, and as they have no prospect of early reinforcement, and are in a state of uncertainty as to any, from the bustling aspect of European affairs, it is probable they may conceive a necessity of making a push at all risks. Perhaps, however, this embarkation is intended for some other purpose; to make a diversion, or execute some partisan exploit elsewhere. On the whole, I find it difficult to believe they are yet ready for any capital operation.

As to your apprehensions of an attempt up the North River, I imagine you may discard any uneasiness on that score, although it will be at all times advisable to be on the watch against such a contingency. It is almost reduced to a certainty, that the principal views of the enemy, in the ensuing campaign, will be directed towards the southward, and to Philadelphia more immediately; of which idea, the discovery before mentioned, with respect to pilots, is no inconsiderable confirmation. Philadelphia is an object calculated to strike and attract attention. It has all along been the main source of supplies towards the war; and the getting it into their possession would deprive us of a wheel we could very badly spare, in the great political and military machine. They are sensible of this, and are equally sensible, that it contains, in itself, and is surrounded by, a prodigious number of persons attached to them, and

inimicable to us, who would lend them all the assistance they could, in the further prosecution of their designs. It is also a common and well-grounded rule in war, to strike first and principally, at the capital towns and cities, in order to the conquest of a country.

I must confess I do not see any object equally interesting to draw their efforts to the northward. Operations merely for plundering and devastation can never answer their end; and if they could, one part of the continent would do nearly as well as another. And as to the notion of forming a junction with the northern army, and cutting off the communication between the Northern and Southern States, I apprehend it will do better in speculation than in practice. Unless the geography of the country is far different from any thing I can conceive, to effect this would require a chain of posts, and such a number of men at each as would never be practicable or maintainable, but to an immense army. In their progress, by hanging upon their rear, and seizing every opportunity of skirmishing, their situation might be rendered insupportably uneasy.

But for fear of mistake, the General has determined to collect a considerable body of troops at or about Peekskill, which will not be drawn off till the intentions of the enemy have acquired a decisive complexion. These will be ready, according to conjunctures, either to proceed northerly or southerly, as may be requisite. Every precaution should be taken to prevent the boats from being destroyed, by collecting them, at the first movement of the enemy,

under cover of one of the forts, or into some inlet, difficult of access, and easily defensible with a small number of men. The loss of them would be an irreparable disadvantage.

The enemy's attempt upon Peekskill is a demonstration of the folly of having any quantity of stores at places so near the water, and so much exposed to a sudden inroad. There should never be more there than sufficient to answer present demands. We have lost a good deal in this way at different times, and I hope experience will at last make us wiser.

His Excellency lately had a visit from the Oneida Chief and five others. He managed them with a good deal of address, and sent them away perfectly satisfied. He persuaded them to go to Philadelphia, but they declined it, alleging their impatience to return, and remove the erroneous opinions of their countrymen, from the misrepresentations of British emissaries, which they were apprehensive might draw them into some rash proceedings. They parted, after having made the most solemn protestations of friendship and good will. His Excellency has been very busy all day in dispatching the southern post, which has prevented me giving him your resolve. It will, no doubt, be very acceptable; and it is with pleasure I inform you that the zeal and abilities of the New York Convention hold the first rank in his estimation.

No news from France, save that the Congress have obtained a credit there, for which they can draw bills to the amount of £100,000 sterling. This will be extremely serviceable in carrying on a trade with the French. The new troops begin to come in. If we

can shortly get any considerable accession of strength, we may be able to strike some brilliant stroke.

P. S.—We have been some time endeavoring to negotiate a regular cartel; but it has been lately broken off, principally on account of Major-General Lee. General Howe will not allow him to be comprehended under the general idea of American prisoners.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS, ETC.

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, April 12, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

I this day have received your favor of the 8th instant. Hurry of business prevents my entering into a particular detail of affairs, either with respect to the enemy or ourselves, though matters remain much in the same situation as when I last wrote. The enemy are unquestionably preparing to take the field as soon as possible, notwithstanding which I believe it may be full as late as I at first suggested before they will be perfectly ready for a general movement. By several persons who have come out of New York within these few days, it is pretty well confirmed that they have constructed a bridge to be laid upon boats, for the purpose, in all probability, of crossing the Delaware.

The new levies begin to come in from the southward, but not in such large numbers as could be wished. It is to be hoped, however, that we shall shortly be sufficiently reinforced to give an effectual obstruction to their designs. The Congress have resolved, if the General approves, to form a camp on

the west side of the Delaware, and have called upon Pennsylvania to furnish 3,000 militia to join the same. Every nerve must and will be strained to prevent Philadelphia falling into the enemy's hands. It is a place of infinite importance.

It is said there are favorable accounts lately received from Doctor Franklin; but we have no authentic advice of the kind, nor does the report extend to any particulars.

Your sentiments of Major Edmonston's conduct correspond with the General's ideas of it. He had given some directions to General Schuyler on the subject. Besides other purposes it might serve, the design of his going to Canada was evidently that he might be a vehicle of instructions to General Carleton. It would be the most convenient, certain, and expeditious mode they could have fallen upon to convey them. I communicated the paragraph of your letter respecting him to his Excellency. He wishes the major might be sent on directly to Philadelphia. I fancy he would be glad to be saved the trouble of an interview with him.

I should be obliged to you to inform the convention, that it is my opinion the General will not permit Mr. Leroy to go into New York. It is a determined point with him to grant no such indulgence when any matter of the kind is referred to him, unless the person applying can assign the most substantial reasons for his request, and can also produce explicit credentials of his political principles and conduct being favorable to the American cause. I conclude from my being instructed to require his parole, that he

cannot give satisfaction on these points. If, however, he should obtain permission, I will execute the resolve transmitted to me. For the future, if the convention have cogent reasons for allowing any subject of the State to go in to the enemy, as they are the best judges of all the circumstances concerning him, they had better send him in without referring the matter particularly to the General.

I take the liberty to inclose a letter to the care of Mr. Jay, the delivery of which to him will be a favor conferred on, etc.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE NEW YORK CONVENTION

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, April 20, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

The disposition of the convention, with respect to the disaffected among you, is highly commendable, and justified by every principle of equity and policy. The necessity of exemplary punishment throughout the States is become evident beyond a doubt, and it were to be wished every one of the thirteen would imitate the judicious conduct of New York. Lenity and forbearance have been tried too long to no purpose: it is high time to discard what the clearest experience has shown to be ineffectual.

But in dispensing punishment, the utmost care and caution ought to be used. The power of doing it, or even of bringing the guilty to trial, should be placed in hands that know well how to use it. I believe it would be a prudent rule to meddle with none but those whose crimes are supported by very sufficient

evidence, and are of a pretty deep dye. The apprehending innocent persons, or those whose offences are of so slender a nature as to make it prudent to dismiss them, furnishes an occasion of triumph, and a foundation for a species of animadversion which is very injurious to the public cause. Persons so apprehended generally return home worse than they were, and by expatiating on their sufferings, first excite the pity towards themselves, and afterwards the abhorrence towards their persecutors, of those with whom they converse. I believe it would also be in general a good rule either to pardon offenders entirely, or to inflict capital and severe punishments. The advice given by a certain general to his son, when the latter had the Roman army in his power, was certainly very politic: he advised him either to destroy them utterly or to dismiss them with every mark of honor and respect. By the first method, says he, you disable the Romans from being your enemies; by the last, you make them your friends. So with respect to the Tories; I would either disable them from doing us any injury, or I would endeavor to gain their friendship by clemency. Inflicting trifling punishments only embitters the minds of those on whom they fall, and increases their disposition to do mischief without taking away the power of doing it.

I shall communicate your additional resolve to the General and consult him on what you mention, and shall let you know his opinion in my next: mine, however, is that those who appear to be of such a character as to be susceptible of reformation, should be employed; but it is a delicate point.

As to news, the most material is, that from intelligence received from Rhode Island, it appears the enemy are abandoning it. This is a preparatory step to the intended operations of the enemy.

The other day we surprised a lieutenant's guard, took sixteen prisoners, and killed three or four.

In a private letter from Philadelphia I am informed that a treaty of a very particular nature is on the point of being concluded between the Court of France and the States of America. There is a prospect of opening a trade with Sweden. I hear Mr. Morris,[1] of Philadelphia, has a vessel arrived from thence.

TO THE COMMITTEE OF THE NEW YORK CONVENTION

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, April 28, 1777.

GENTLEMEN:

Extreme hurry of business puts it out of my power to say but very little.

Your information concerning a piece of ordnance lately constructed at Philadelphia is true. There is such a piece at headquarters, weighs 227 pounds, carries a three-pound ball. The iron is wrought, hooped, and welded together. The General and others esteem it a great acquisition. It has been fired twenty times, as fast as possible, and is supposed to be thorough proof. For my part I am rather dubious of this matter, and have recommended fifty successive discharges instead of twenty. If she would stand that, her sufficiency would be

[1] Robert Morris, the distinguished financier of the revolution.

ascertained beyond a doubt, and her value would be immense; and as it is a new experiment, we cannot take too much pains to be sure. If Mr. Livingston can construct pieces of the same kind and weight that will stand a similar proof, he will render the most essential service to his country. We cannot have too respectable an artillery, and he need not doubt they will be wanted.

As to ships opposite to Fort Washington, the General first supposed they might be intended to make a descent on the Jersey side and come by surprise on our left flank; but he now considers it wholly as an amusement, while they were executing their attempt on the stores at Danbury. Of this affair you are probably as well advised as we are.

I thank you for your promise of sending me the model of your government as soon as published. I have sanguine expectations concerning it.

Nothing new at headquarters but the attempt against Danbury. If the enemy do not * * * *[1] till they get reinforced or receive further orders.

Troops coming on from the southward. We are told two thousand Carolinians, far on their way to Philadelphia—a part arrived.

TO WILLIAM LIVINGSTON[2]

April, 1777.

A number of disaffected persons having been taken up and brought to his Excellency, he has ordered an

[1] Not legible in the manuscript.

[2] The distinguished revolutionary Governor of New Jersey.

examination into their cases to know who of them were subject to a military jurisdiction, and who came properly under the cognizance of the civil power; also to discriminate those who were innocent or guilty of trivial offences from those whose crimes were of a more capital and heinous nature, directing that those of the former character should be dismissed, and those of the latter be referred to you for further trial and punishment. The examination, at which I was present, has been accordingly made, and the enclosed list of names will inform you of those who have been deemed proper subjects for a legal prosecution; and who are herewith sent under guard to be disposed of as you shall direct. I have transmitted you a bundle of papers, in which you will find the information and evidence that support the charges against them, and the confession they made in the court of inquiry. Many of them have nothing against them but what is to be found in their own acknowledgments. How far these may operate in fixing their guilt you can best determine. Several of them have been taken in arms, and others were beyond a doubt employed in enlisting men for the service of the enemy. You will readily concur with his Excellency in the obvious necessity of inflicting exemplary punishment on such daring offenders, to repress that insolent spirit of open and avowed enmity to the American cause, which, unhappily, is too prevalent in this and some of the States. The examination, in this instance, is somewhat irregular and out of the common order of things. But in the present unsettled state of government, the distinc-

tion between the civil and military powers cannot be upheld with that exactness which every friend to society must wish. His Excellency desires to avoid nothing more, I flatter myself you will believe me, than deviations from the strict rules of propriety in this respect, or the least encroachments either upon the rights of the citizens or of the magistrate. It was necessary to make inquiry for the sake of the discrimination before mentioned, and tenderness to the innocent, to save them from long and unmerited confinement, commended the measure.[1]

TO WILLIAM LIVINGSTON

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, April 29, 1777.

SIR:

The inclosed was intended to be sent with the prisoners mentioned in the list; but before this could be conveniently done, Mr. Sims, one of the Chief-Justices of the State, came to this town, and informed me, that the Governor and Council were upon the point of adjourning; and that the sending of the prisoners to them would only be an embarrassment, without answering, at present, any valuable purpose. He considered himself authorized to take the matter under his direction, and desired a sight of the papers relating to it. After perusing them, he determined it was best the prisoners should remain here, until he should receive your further orders on the subject; and delivered me a letter for you, containing a representation of their cases, as they appear to him, in

[1] Reprinted from Hamilton's *History of the Republic*, i., 194.

order to know your sense, in what manner they shall be disposed of.

He admits two of them, Woolverton and Silas Howel, to bail.

In addition to the former, I send you a second list of four others that have been lately committed to jail. These are high offenders, and among the number of those who it were to be wished could have an immediate trial and punishment. Isaac Ogden, in particular, is one of the most barefaced, impudent fellows that ever came under my observation. He openly acknowledged himself a subject of the king of Great Britain; and flatly refused to give any satisfaction to some questions that were put to him respecting one Moses Nichols, an emissary from the enemy; assigning no other reason for his refusal, than that he had given his word to be silent.

A spirit of disaffection shows itself with so much boldness and violence in different parts of this State, that it is the ardent wish of his Excellency, that no delay, which can be avoided, might be used in making examples of some of the most atrocious offenders. If something be not speedily done, to strike a terror into the disaffected, the consequences must be very disagreeable.

Among others, all security to the friends of the American cause will be destroyed; and the natural effect of this, will be an extinction of zeal in seconding and promoting it. Their attachment, if it remain, will be a dead, inactive, useless principle. And the disaffected, emboldened by impunity, will be encouraged to proceed to the most dangerous and pernicious lengths.

TO WILLIAM DUER.[1]

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, 6th May, 1777.

SIR:

The bearer of this is Mr. Malmedi,[2] a French gentleman of learning, abilities, and experience. I believe he thinks himself entitled to preferment, and comes to Congress for that purpose. At the recommendation of General Lee, he was made Brigadier-General by the State of Rhode Island, and filled the station to the satisfaction of his employers, as appears by a letter from Governor Cook,[3] speaking of him in the highest terms of approbation. This has led him to hope that he should be adopted by the Continent on an equal footing. But in this he will no doubt be mistaken, as there are many insuperable objections to such an event. Among others, it would tend to raise the expectations of the Frenchmen in general, already too high, to a pitch, which it would be impossible to gratify or endure. It might not however, be amiss to do whatever propriety would warrant to keep him in good humor, as he is a man of sense and

[1] Col. Wm. Duer, born in England in 1747, served with Lord Clive in India, and came to New York in 1768. He warmly espoused the patriot side, married Catherine Alexander, daughter of William Alexander, commonly known as Lord Stirling, and was a life-long friend of Hamilton, who stood by him and helped him in the business misfortunes which befell him, and which cost Hamilton deep anxiety. Col. Duer figures often in this correspondence. He was at this time on the New York Committee of Safety, and was soon after chosen to Congress.

[2] Mr. Malmedi was appointed Colonel on the Continental establishment. He thought the rank below his deserts, and was one of the many French officers who harassed Washington on this score. See *Writings of Washington*, iv., 419.

[3] Nicholas Cook, Governor of Rhode Island from 1775 to 1778.

merit. I think policy would justify the advancing him a step higher than his former Continental rank.

Congress in the beginning went upon a very injudicious plan with respect to Frenchmen. To every adventurer that came, without even the shadow of credentials, they gave the rank of field officers. This circumstance, seconding the aspiring disposition natural to those people, carried the expectations of those who had really any pretensions to the character of officers to a length that exceeds all the bounds of moderation. As it was impossible to pursue this impolitic plan, the Congress have begun to retrench their excessive liberality; and the consequence has been universal disgust and discontent.

It would, perhaps, be injurious, as the French are much addicted to national punctilio, to run into the opposite extreme to that first embraced, and by that means create a general clamor and dissatisfaction. Policy suggests the propriety of discriminating a few of the most deserving, and endeavoring to keep them in temper, even by gratifying them beyond what they can reasonably pretend to. This will enable us to shake off the despicable part with safety, and to turn a deaf ear to the exorbitant demands of the many. It will be easily believed in France that their want of merit occasioned their want of success, from the extraordinary marks of favor that have been conferred on others; whereas, the united voice of complaint from the whole, might make ill impressions in their own country, which it is not our interest should exist.

We are already greatly embarrassed with the

Frenchmen among us, and, from the genius of the people, shall continue to be so. It were to be wished that our agents in France, instead of courting them to come out, were instructed to give no encouragement but where they could not help it; that is, where applications were made to them by persons, countenanced and supported by great men, whom it would be impolitic to disoblige. Be assured, sir, we shall never be able to satisfy them; and they can be of no use to us, at least for some time. Their ignorance of our language, of the disposition of the people, the resources and deficiencies of the country—their own habits and tempers; all these are disqualifications that put it out of their power to be of any real use or service to us. You will consider what I have said entirely as my own sentiments.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, May 7, 1777.

I thank you for the favor of the pamphlet[1] containing your form of government, which, without flattery, I consider as more judicious and digested than any thing of the kind that has yet appeared among us; though I am not so unreserved in my approbation as to think it free from defects. While I view it in the main as a wise and excellent system, I freely confess it appears to me to have some faults

[1] The Constitution of New York was at this time under consideration, and Morris was on the committee engaged in making a draft, and had made some very able speeches on the subject in the Provincial Convention or Congress.

which I could wish did not exist. Were it not too late to discuss particulars for any useful end, or could my judgment have any weight in a matter which is the work of so many far more able and discerning than I can pretend to be, I should willingly descend to an exhibition of those parts I dislike and my reasons for disapproving. But, in the present situation of things, it would be both useless and presumptuous.

I congratulate you on the late important arrivals to the eastward. We consider them as immense acquisitions. Did I not suppose you must be possessed of the same particulars we have at headquarters, I would transmit those we have to you. I congratulate you also on the Danbury expedition. The stores destroyed there have been purchased at a pretty high price to the enemy. The spirit of the people on the occasion does them great honor—is a pleasing proof that they have lost nothing of that primitive zeal with which they began the contest, and will be a galling discouragement to the enemy from repeating attempts of the kind. Such an opposition, under such circumstances, was not to be expected. By every account, both from our friends and from themselves, they cannot have sustained a loss of less than five hundred killed, wounded, and taken. An honest, intelligent lad, a prisoner with them, who made his escape two or three days ago, informs us that he saw three vessels loaded with wounded. He was permitted to look into the hold of two of them, and affirms there could not be fewer than forty in each. He attempted to inspect the

contents of the third, but was hindered by the sentries. He also informs us that there were loud wailings and lamentations among the soldiers' women on the occasion, and that the people of New York considered the affair in the light of a defeat to the British troops.

From some late appearances, my opinion is greatly shaken as to the enemy's intention to move against Philadelphia. I begin to fear they will disappoint us with a contrary movement. The General is aware of this possibility, and will do every thing he can to provide for the event: and I trust the convention of your State will co-operate with him by every exertion in their power. By intelligence received yesterday and to-day from Generals Putnam and Lincoln at the outposts, we have reason to suspect the enemy will soon evacuate Brunswick and push for Amboy, whence they will no doubt embark for some expedition by water. This may be either to Philadelphia or up the North River; or, perhaps, the appearances that indicate this may be only feints to perplex and deceive us. The testimony of every person that comes from them confirms this fact, that their horses are in such miserable condition as to render them incapable of any material operations by land. If, therefore, proper care be taken wherever they shall point their efforts to prevent their collecting supplies of good horses among ourselves, I know not how it will be possible for them to penetrate any distance into the country. As far as it may depend upon them, I hope the convention will attend to this circumstance, and will take effectual measures to

put it out of their power to gain such supplies in any part of your State towards which they may direct their movements. Nothing particular from Europe. Doctor Lee,[1] indeed, writes that, from the face of affairs there, a war cannot be postponed longer than three months. He thinks, however, the English will be able to get a reinforcement this year of 8,000 or 10,000 Germans. If I mistake not, he says they have already engaged them and sent transports to take them in.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, May 12, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I have received the pleasure of your favor of yesterday's date. The reasons you assign for the interval of silence on your part are admitted as sufficient, though I regret that the principal one exists—the combination of the Tories for a general insurrection. But, perhaps, on the scale of policy, I ought rather to congratulate you on the event. That there are too many Tories in your State, as well as in several others, is a fact too well known. That they should confederate themselves for active purposes of revolt and disaffection, when once discovered, is desirable, because it arms the vindictive justice of the State, and will justify, in the eyes of all the world, a radical blow at the faction. Were it not that we have seen so many similar instances, that

[1] Arthur Lee, of Virginia, brother of Richard Henry Lee, at this time one of our agents in Europe.

only prove the temerity and folly of the Tories, I should consider this as a presumptive argument, that the enemy intend your way.

It seems now fully the opinion of our generals, that the last year's project for uniting the two armies, by the conquest of your State, will be prosecuted this campaign. To confirm this supposition, all the later intelligence we have received from the enemy strongly indicates an intention to evacuate the Jerseys; and 't is thought there will be very great obstacles to an attempt on Philadelphia, by way of the Delaware; 't is concluded that the North River must be the object. And, upon this principle, Generals Greene and Knox, in whom his Excellency has great confidence, are sent to examine the situation of things with you, and in concert with General McDougal, who is in equal estimation, to adopt every proper expedient for putting you in the best state of defence. They set out this day.

If the enemy do not, in fact, aim at Philadelphia, they have been very artful in throwing out appearances well calculated to deceive; and which, though they have not had so full an effect as at any time to cause our cautious General to lose sight of the other object which 't is now imagined they propose to themselves, yet they have so far deceived as to beget pretty universally the opinion they wished to impose. But, for my own part, though I am staggered in my conjectures, yet I by no means give up my first supposition. I think it very probable they are only evacuating the Jerseys to be out of danger of an attack from us, which they have reason to fear from

the increasing strength of our army, and mean to encamp on Staten Island till reinforced. It would be madness in them, weak as they are in numbers, to risk all in any capital attempt, and I am confident they will not do it unless they have a desperate game to play, and have no expectation of reinforcements. Such a conduct would be contrary to every principle of war or policy. Howe cannot take the field with more than eight thousand men; let him go where he will, the probability of defeat will be strong, and the consequences of it would be absolutely fatal. How can he hope to penetrate far with so small a force, and with such a miserable supply of horses to convey his artillery and baggage? It seems to me, too, with respect to the supposed design upon your State, if it really existed, they would have taken care to have seized your forts, and other important posts, when they might have been apprised you were in no condition to defend them.

We have lately had one or two little skirmishes here. A party from Boundbrook beat up some of the enemy's advanced pickets from Brunswick. An attack was made upon their pickets near Bonhamtown. We have no regular account of this matter; but what we have had is to this purport: "That a party under Col. Cook attacked one of their pickets and drove it in; that it was reinforced and sallied out again, and was beaten in a second time; that it received a second reinforcement and made a second sally; and that Gen. Maxwell, who conducted the affair, perceiving the matter growing too serious by continual succors coming to them from Brunswick and Amboy,

thought it best to retire which he did in good order—the enemy keeping at a respectful distance during the whole time of the retrogradation." 'T is said we have lost between twenty and thirty killed and wounded, and a few stragglers taken; and 't is also asserted that some of our officers counted nineteen dead bodies of the enemy on the field. The Royal Highlanders had taken possession of a wood, by way of ambuscade, out of which they were expelled by our troops. Here, I believe, the principal loss was sustained on both sides.

P. S.—I thank you for the inclosures of every kind. I believe you have not received a letter I wrote a few days ago, giving my idea of your Constitution, with which, on a second inspection, I am better pleased than at first. You will oblige me by forwarding the inclosed.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, May 19, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I this moment received the favor of your letter of the 16th instant.

I partly agree and partly disagree with you respecting the deficiencies of your Constitution. That there is a want of vigor in the executive, I believe, will be found true. To determine the qualifications proper for the chief executive magistrate requires the deliberate wisdom of a select assembly, and cannot be safely lodged with the people at large. That instability is inherent in the nature of popular govern-

ments I think very disputable; unstable democracy, is an epithet frequently in the mouths of politicians; but I believe that from a strict examination of the matter—from the records of history, it will be found that the fluctuations of governments in which the popular principle has borne a considerable sway, have proceeded from its being compounded with other principles;—and from its being made to operate in an improper channel. Compound governments, though they may be harmonious in the beginning, will introduce distinct interests, and these interests will clash, throw the State into convulsions, and produce a change or dissolution. When the deliberative or judicial powers are vested wholly or partly in the collective body of the people, you must expect error, confusion, and instability. But a representative democracy, where the right of election is well secured and regulated, and the exercise of the legislative, executive, and judiciary authorities is vested in select persons, chosen really and not nominally by the people, will, in my opinion, be most likely to be happy, regular, and durable. That the complexity of your Legislature will occasion delay and dilatoriness, is evident, and I fear may be attended with a much greater evil;—as expedition is not very material in making laws, especially when the government is well digested and matured by time. The evil I mean is, that in time your Senate, from the very name, and from the mere circumstance of its being a separate member of the Legislature, will be liable to degenerate into a body purely aristocratical.

And I think the danger of an abuse of power from

a simple legislature, would not be very great in a government where the equality and fulness of popular representation is so wisely provided for as in yours. On the whole, though I think there are the defects intimated, I think your government far the best that we have yet seen, and capable of giving long and substantial happiness to the people. Objections to it should be suggested with great caution and reserve.

Nothing particular in the military line. The enemy still in the Jerseys, though they have been some time sending away their stores, baggage, etc., and are raising new works of defence. All this may be preparatory to an evacuation at all events, and they may be only intended to pave the way for a retreat, in case of an attack or any accident.

Advices from the West Indies, that have an appearance of authenticity, mention a French vessel bound for the continent, being taken by the British frigate *Perseus*, and carried into Dominique; and a remonstrance being made by the Governor of Martinique, threatening reprisals in case of a detention. Nay, some accounts say he has actually seized all the English vessels in the harbor of Martinique, and imprisoned their seamen till restitution shall be made. If these accounts be true, they are important, and may be considered as an earnest of more general hostility.

Perhaps your next favor will find me at Boundbrook. Headquarters will soon be moved there. Our family seem desirous of cultivating a closer acquaintance with the enemy than we have had the pleasure of for some time past.

Relying on your punctuality in favoring me with any important intelligence your way, I am likely to lose a beaver hat, which was staked against the truth of the report of the stores at St. John's being destroyed. If you forget me in future, I will certainly excommunicate you.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

MIDDLE BROOK CAMP, June 2, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I received your favor per express, and as the absence of my former respectable correspondents has made a change necessary, I am happy that you have been substituted in their room.

Except a body of militia at and about Pompton, and a few detachments of observation, our whole army is now collected at two points; the main body here, and a division under General Sullivan at Princeton. Though this alteration of circumstances takes off in a great measure the restraints imposed upon the enemy during the winter, gives them a more ample field to range in, and exposes the country more to their ravages, yet the measure is abundantly justified by every wise military maxim. The rigor of the season has been heretofore our chief security against those advantages which might have been taken of our dispersed state; and this dispersion was necessary both for the conveniency of winter-quarters, and with a view to confine and distress the enemy, which was the most capital object we could then propose to ourselves. It was also necessary by this method to

second the check to that torrent of influence which their successes in the Jerseys had given them. Many other justifying reasons might be assigned, which I doubt not you will easily conceive, and which it would be indiscreet to commit to paper.

But now that a more active season is arrived, and something of importance must be done on one side or the other, it becomes our business to put ourselves in the best posture both for defence and offence. Common-sense dictates that the best way to effect this is to collect our strength. In a collected state we can best repel a general attack; we can best make one, if circumstances warrant it; and we can move with greater expedition to disconcert any sudden push not immediately upon us, which the enemy are likely to make. It is needless to enlarge on a subject which your own judgment will enable you of itself to view in a just light.

As to the designs of the enemy, appearances are so intricate, fluctuating, and seemingly inconsistent, that it is difficult to form any certain conclusion from them. Either they do not understand themselves, and are very irresolute and fickle, or they very artfully manage matters to deceive us. I am rather inclined to suppose the former. This, however, I may say with tolerable certainty, that my ideas of their intending to operate to the southward, derive just support from such parts of their conduct lately as are most intelligible. We have a variety of concurring intelligence that they have lately drawn more troops into the Jerseys—that they have brought over a large number of wagons, and all the

boats prepared for bridges, with several other particulars of less importance, all of which denote a preparation to operate this way. Persons who have been among them assert confidently that they mean to attack us. But we are divided in sentiment as to the probability of that, or of their making a forced march to Philadelphia. If they act wisely, they will neither attack us in our present situation, strongly posted as we are, nor will they attempt to cross a river, where they may certainly expect opposition in front, and leaving at the same time a formidable army in the rear. He should endeavor to draw us from here and fight us upon more equal ground. But after all, if he expects any timely reinforcements, upon what rational principle can he risk his own reputation and all the hopes of his cause, in an attempt with his present force, so extremely important and hazardous? Perhaps he only means to get every thing in readiness against the arrival of the reinforcements looked for, that he may immediately commence his operations. Things, however, will hardly bear this construction. We are told that in seventeen sail lately arrived from Europe, there were about 2,000 raw recruits.

This from the deserters.

The enemy yesterday perpetrated a most barbarous butchery upon a Lieutenant Martin of ours. He was out with a scouting party and met some of the British light-horse; his men, it is said quitted him. But however other matters may be, 't is certain his dead body was found most horribly mangled. He had not a single bullet wound, but was hacked to pieces with

the sword; he had several cuts on his head, each of which was sufficient to dispatch him, besides a number of more inconsiderable scars about his body and hands. It is evident that the most wanton and unnecessary cruelty must have been used towards him; for the greater part of his wounds must have been given him when utterly out of a condition to resist.

This may be relied on as a fact, for I saw his corpse, as did also every officer and soldier in camp that chose it. The General sent him down to their lines with a letter to Lord Cornwallis, as an undeniable evidence of their brutality; but the letter was taken from the flag and sent in; the flag and the body not permitted to pass their outposts.

TO ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON [1]

HEADQUARTERS, CAMP AT MIDDLE BROOK, June 28, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

Yours of the 25th came to hand last night. Since my last addressed to Mr. Morris, the enemy have been trying a second experiment to tempt us to an engagement, on equal terms of ground. Under the supposition of their intending to evacuate the Jerseys immediately, in order to keep up the idea of a pursuit, and to be in a posture to take advantage of any critical movement that might present itself, to give

[1] A leading patriot and a member of the well-known New York family. He was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, for many years Chancellor of New York, and Minister to France from 1801 to 1804. At this time he was a member of the New York Constitutional Convention.

them a blow; the chief part of our army, after their retreat from Brunswick, was marched down to Quibbletown, and parties detached thence further towards the enemy. Finding this disposition take place, and expecting that, elated by what had passed, we might be willing to venture upon a general engagement, which is Howe's only hope, he came out with his whole army from Amboy, only on Thursday morning, and made a forced march towards our left, with design, if possible, to cut off some of our detachments, particularly one under Lord Stirling; and, probably, if we were not expeditious in regaining the heights, to get there before us, by rapidly entering the passes on our left. Lord Stirling's party was near being surrounded; but after a smart skirmish with the enemy's main body, made their retreat good to Westfield, and ascended the pass of the mountains back of the Scotch plains. The other parties, after skirmishing on their flanks, came off to join the main body, and take possession of the heights. The enemy continued their march towards our left as far as Westfield, and there halted. In the meantime, it was judged prudent to return with the army to the mountains, lest it should be their intention to get into them, and force us to fight them on their own terms. They remained at Westfield till the next day, and perceiving their views disappointed, have again returned to Amboy, plundering and burning as usual. We had parties hanging about them on their return; but they were so much on their guard, no favourable opportunity could be found of giving them any material annoyance. Their loss we cannot ascer-

tain; and our own, in men, is inconsiderable, though we have as yet received no returns of the missing. I have no doubt they have lost more men than we; but unfortunately, I won't say from what cause, they got three field-pieces from us, which will give them room for vaporing, and embellish their excursion, in the eyes of those who make every trifle a matter of importance. It is not unlikely they will soon be out of the Jerseys; but where they will go to next is mere matter of conjecture, for, as you observe, their conduct is so eccentric as to leave no certain grounds on which to form a judgment of their intentions.

I know the comments that some people will make on our Fabian conduct. It will be imputed either to cowardice, or to weakness. But the more discerning, I trust, will not find it difficult to conceive, that it proceeds from the truest policy, and is an argument neither of the one nor the other.

The liberties of America are an infinite stake. We should not play a desperate game for it, or put it upon the issue of a single cast of the die. The loss of one general engagement may effectually ruin us, and it would certainly be folly to hazard it, unless our resources for keeping up an army were at an end, and some decisive blow was absolutely necessary; or unless our strength was so great as to give certainty of success. Neither is the case—America can in all probability maintain its army for years, and our numbers, though such as would give a reasonable hope of success, are not such as should make us entirely sanguine. A third consideration, did it exist, might make it expedient to risk such an event

—the prospect of very great reinforcements to the enemy; but every appearance contradicts this, and affords all reason to believe they will get very inconsiderable accessions of strength this campaign. All the European maritime powers are interested for the defeat of the British arms in America, and will never assist them. A small part of Germany is disposed to make a market of its troops, and even this seems not over-fond of being drained any further. Many springs may be put in motion even to put a stop to this. The king of Prussia may, perhaps, without much difficulty, be engaged to espouse views unfriendly to the court of Britain, and a nod of his would be sufficient to prevent all future German succors. He, as well as most other powers of Europe, feels the necessity of commerce and a large maritime force to be generally respectable. His situation, until lately, has been unfavorable to this; but the reduction of Poland, and the acquisition of Dantzig in the Baltic, have put it very much in his power to pursue commercial schemes; and may tempt him to be propitious to American independence. Russian assistance is still infinitely more precarious; for besides that it cannot be the true interest of that ambitious empire to put its troops to sale, it is at present embroiled with the Turks, and will want all its men to employ in its own wars. England herself, from the nature of her policy, can furnish few soldiers, and even those few can ill be spared to come to America in the present hostile appearance of affairs in Europe. On whatever side it is considered, no great reinforcements are to be expected to the

British army in America. It is therefore Howe's business to make the most of his present strength; and as he is not numerous enough to conquer and garrison as he goes, his only hope lies in fighting us, and giving a general defeat at one blow.[1]

On our part we are continually strengthening our political springs in Europe, and may every day look for more effectual aids than we have yet received. Our own army is continually growing stronger in men, arms, and discipline: we shall soon have an important addition of artillery, now on its way to join us. We can maintain our present numbers good, at least, by enlistments, while the enemy must dwindle away; and at the end of the summer the disparity between us will be infinitely great, and facilitate any exertions that may be made to settle the business with them. Their affairs will be growing worse, ours better; so that delay will ruin them. It will serve to perplex and fret them, and precipitate them into measures that we can turn to good account. Our business then is to avoid a general engagement, and to waste the enemy away by constantly goading their sides in a desultory, teasing way.

In the meantime it is painful to leave a part of the inhabitants a prey to their depredations; and it is wounding to the feelings of a soldier, to see an enemy parading before him and daring him to fight which he is obliged to decline.

But a part must be sacrificed to the whole, and passion must give way to reason. You will be sensible

[1] For a youth of twenty this is a rather remarkable analysis of the condition of Europe.

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that it will not be advisable to publish the sentiments contained in this letter as coming from me; because this will make the enemy more fully acquainted with our views; but it might not be amiss to have them circulated, as those which ought to govern the conduct of the army, in order to prepare the minds of the people for what may happen, and take off the disagreeable impressions our caution may make.

TO DR. HUGH KNOX [1]

July, 1777.

* * * This event (the evacuation of Ticonderoga [2]) redounds very little to our credit. For if the post was untenable, or required a larger number of troops to defend it than could be spared for the purpose, it ought long ago to have been foreseen and given up. Instead of that, we have kept a large quantity of cannon in it, and have been heaping up very valuable magazines of stores and provisions that, in the critical moment of defence, are abandoned and lost. This affair will be attended with several evil consequences; for besides the loss of our stores, which we cannot well afford, it opens a new and easy door by which to penetrate the northern States. It will fix the hitherto fluctuating disposition of the Indians in that quarter in their favor, and expose the frontiers of the adjacent country to their

[1] Dr. Hugh Knox, a worthy minister in the West Indies, who had advised and helped Hamilton in his boyhood, and always remained his warm admirer.

[2] July 5, 1777.

depredations. But though it is a misfortune we have reason to lament, I dare say it will be regarded with you as much more important than it really is, and as materially endangering the success of our cause, which is by no means the case. Our opposition is at this time too well matured and has too great stability to be shaken by an accident of that kind. While we have a respectable army in the field, and resources to feed, clothe, and arm them, we are safe. We have had a force sufficient for the foregoing part of the campaign to maintain such a superiority over the main army of the enemy as effectually to hinder them from attaining any of their purposes. And, to the northward, with the reinforcements sent up to succor the retreating garrison of Ticonderoga and the militia flocking in from New England, I think there is little doubt we have by this time a force adequate to give Mr. Burgoyne a seasonable check. One good effect will result from the misfortune, which is, that it will stimulate the eastern States to greater exertions than they might otherwise make.

By our last advices the enemy were in possession of all the country between Ticonderoga and Fort George; and our army, nearly equal in number to them, were about to take post somewhere between Fort Edward and Saratoga.

The consequences of this northern affair will depend much upon the part that Howe acts. If he were to co-operate with Burgoyne it would demand our utmost efforts to counteract them. But if he should go towards the southward, all or most of the advantages of Burgoyne's success will be lost. He will

either be obliged to content himself with the possession of Ticonderoga and the dependent fortresses, and with carrying on a partisan war the rest of the campaign, or he must precipitate himself into certain ruin by attempting to advance into the country with a very incompetent force.

Appearances lead us to suppose that Howe is fool enough to meditate a southern expedition; for he has now altered his station at Staten Island, mentioned above, and has fallen down to the Hook. Judging it morally certain that there would be a co-operation of the two armies, we thought it expedient to march northerly; and had accordingly reached within fourteen miles of New Windsor, the place where we could cross the North River without danger or interruption. But this new movement of the enemy's fleet, has induced us to return a few miles, and make a disposition for marching southerly. We shall, however, be cautious how we proceed on that course, lest nothing more than a feint is intended, to divert us from the real object.

If they go to the southward in earnest, they must have the capture of Philadelphia in view; for there is no other inducement. We shall endeavor to get there in time to oppose them; and shall have the principal part of the Continental force, and a large body of spirited militia, many of them, from their services during the last campaign, pretty well inured to arms, to make the opposition with. Yet I would not have you to be much surprised if Philadelphia should fall; for the enemy will doubtless go there with a determination to succeed at all hazard; and

we shall not be able to prevent them, without risking a general action, the expediency of which will depend upon circumstances. If the militia turn out with that zeal we have a right to expect, from their conduct when the enemy made their last experiment in the Jerseys, and were supposed to be going to Philadelphia, we may do it without much inconvenience. If they fall materially short of it, we shall be obliged to confine ourselves to a skirmishing opposition, which we cannot expect will be effectual. It may be asked, If, to avoid a general engagement, we give up objects of the first importance, what is to hinder the enemy from carrying every important point, and ruining us? My answer is, that our hopes are not placed in any particular city or spot of ground, but in the preserving a good army, furnished with proper necessaries, to take advantage of favorable opportunities, and waste and defeat the enemy by piecemeal. Every new post they take, requires a new division of their forces, and enables us to strike with our united force against a part of theirs: and such is their present situation, that another Trenton affair will amount to a complete victory on our part; for they are at too low an ebb to bear another stroke of the kind. Perhaps, before I may have an opportunity of sending this, facts will unfold what I am now endeavoring to anticipate by conjecture.

You will expect some animadversions on the temper and views of the French nation. I presume you are nearly as well acquainted with the assistance they are giving us as I am, both by their intrigues in

foreign courts, and by supplies of every kind of warlike stores and apparatus.

It does not admit of a doubt that they are interested to wish us success; and their conduct plainly shows, they are willing to give us every aid essential to our preservation. But it is natural they should desire to do it with as much convenience to themselves as they can. I apprehend they are not overfond of plunging themselves into a war with England if they can avoid it, and still answer the end they have to pursue: and, indeed, from the evident reluctance shown on the part of the latter, to do any thing that may bring about such an event, it becomes extremely difficult to draw her into it. The conclusion we may make, is, that France will not wish to force England into a war, unless she finds our affairs require it absolutely; and England will not enter into one, till she is compelled to do it.

My best respects to all friends; and I beg you will believe me to be, with unabated regard, etc.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, MORRISTOWN, July 6, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I received your favour of the 4th, by express. If I recollect how far my last went, it did not announce the return of the enemy from Westfield to Amboy, nor their evacuation of that place since. After rest- and refreshing themselves a night, they decamped the following day, and proceeded to Amboy, from

which place they went to Staten Island as expeditiously as they could; where they still remain.

The news from the northward wore so serious a face, that our generals thought the enemy were about to operate in earnest against our posts in that quarter; and, as supposing this the case, General Howe might certainly be expected to co-operate by way of the North River, it was judged necessary to move the main body of the army from Middle Brook to Morristown; to advance a division under General Sullivan to Pompton, and another under General Parsons as far as Peekskill. A brigade at that port, under General Nixon, was ordered, as soon as Parsons' division arrived near its destination, to proceed immediately as a reinforcement to the northern army. This disposition is deemed advantageous to prevent the success of a *coup de main* on the Highland passes, and not inconsistent with a proper attention to Philadelphia, should the northern alarm prove nothing more than a diversion, and Howe return to the charge that way.

I am loath to risk a conjecture about Mr. Howe. He is such an unintelligible gentleman, that no rule of interpretation can possibly be found out by which to unravel his designs. If he acted like a man of sense, he would wait quietly on Staten Island, and there concentrate all his forces. He would draw around him all the men that could be spared from Canada, and all that are now at Rhode Island. With these, and the reinforcements he may receive from Europe, he would make a point of forcing us, by some means or other to an action. In this his only

hope lies. If he could defeat our army and improve the moment of success, he would go very near effecting his purpose; but, let him go to the northward or to the southward, every new post he takes weakens his main body and makes it the more liable to be ruined by our collective strength. Any object short of our army is a bad one, and that plan is the worst, where, by a division of his forces, he runs the hazard, in case of an accident either way, of having his whole scheme overturned.

We have different accounts of the present situation of his army. Some tell us that the whole is now encamped on Staten Island; others, that the greater part of the Hessians are on board the ships. By some sailors who came from them yesterday, we are told that the ships are taking in water and provisions for two months, and that conveniences for transporting horses are fitting up in them. All this is rather vague, and may or may not be true.

Their flourishes in the Jerseys, I believe, cannot have cost them less than six or seven hundred men. We have not lost above a hundred. This is the best way to ruin them without risking any thing.

Our present situation is embarrassing. Their ships give them a vast advantage, and we shall probably be much puzzled when they begin their operations again. We shall, however, act cautiously, and do the best we can. We are anxiously waiting for northern intelligence.

Please forward the inclosed to General Schuyler per first opportunity.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, SMITH'S CLOVE,[1] July 22, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

Your favor of the eighteenth from Saratoga reached me yesterday. Your pronouncing Fort Edward among the other forts indefensible, surprises me a little, as it is entirely contrary to the representations of several gentlemen of judgment, who have had an opportunity of seeing and considering its situation; by whom we have been taught to believe that it would be an excellent post, at least for checking and retarding Burgoyne's progress. I agree with you that our principal strength in the quarter you are, will be in the forests and natural strength of the country, and in the want of forage, provisions, carriages, etc., in which the enemy may easily be thrown, by taking away what there are of those articles, which, you observe, have never been in great abundance.

I am doubtful whether Burgoyne will attempt to penetrate far, and whether he will not content himself with harassing our back settlements by parties assisted by the savages, who, it is to be feared, will pretty generally be tempted by the enemy's late successes to confederate in hostilities against us.

This doubt arises from some appearances that indicate a southern movement of General Howe's army, which, if it should really happen, will certainly be a barrier against any further impressions of Burgoyne;

[1] Sussex County, New Jersey; Washington calls this place simply "The Clove," the name which it bears to-day.

for it cannot be supposed he would be rash enough to plunge into the bosom of the country without an expectation of being met by General Howe. Things must prove very averse to us indeed, should he make such an attempt, and *not be ruined by it.* I confess, however, that the appearances I allude to do not carry a full evidence in my mind, because they are opposed by others of a contradictory kind, and because I cannot conceive upon what principle of common-sense or military propriety Howe can be running away from Burgoyne to the southward.

It is much to be wished he may, even though it should give him the possession of Philadelphia, which by our remoteness from it, may very well happen. In this case we may not only, if we think proper, retaliate, by aiming a stroke at New York; but we may come upon him with the greatest part of our collective force, to act against that part which is under him. We shall then be certain that Burgoyne cannot proceed, and that a small force of Continental troops will be sufficient for that partisan war which he must carry on the rest of the campaign.

A small force will also be sufficient to garrison the posts in the Highlands, and prevent any danger there; so that we shall be able to bring nearly the whole of the Continental army against Mr. Howe. The advantages of this are obvious. Should he be satisfied with the splendor of his acquisition, and shut himself up in Philadelphia, we can ruin him by confinement. Should he leave a garrison there and go forward, we can either fall upon that or his main body, diminished as it will be by such a measure,

with our whole force. There will, however, be many disagreeable consequences attending such an event, amongst which the foremost is the *depreciation of our currency*, which, from the importance in which Philadelphia is held, cannot fail to ensue.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, CORYELL'S FERRY, July 29, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I have the pleasure of your favor of the 25th. I cannot be induced to think the enemy are so numerous as you apprehend, and would place no dependence on what is said either by deserters or prisoners, further than as it respects their own company, nor even that with regard to prisoners in general, who commonly have their cue, as the phrase is, and know very well how to manufacture stories calculated to serve the purposes of the side they belong to. If we may judge at all from the state of the British and foreign regiments in Howe's army, or the proportion of recruits they have had this year, we cannot but believe the representations you mention greatly exaggerated. Though the northern army have not suffered much by action, they have probably suffered more by sickness than the southern; for many accounts agree that they have been very sickly, and particularly, that there was a great mortality among them while lying at the Isle of Noix. From the estimate of the first prisoner, they must have been greatly reduced by some means or other; for it appears that before his company had been augmented

by the twenty-four foreigners, it was only twenty-six strong; and it is very improbable it should have had so large an augmentation, for I am morally certain the regiments under Howe have not had fifty men each as recruits, and I see no reason to suppose Burgoyne's could have had so much better luck. Eight companies, at twenty-six men each, amount to two hundred and eight. Suppose each regiment to have received one hundred recruits, which, by every rule of comparison, must be more than the truth; this brings a regiment to about three hundred men. Ten regiments, at three hundred each, amount to three thousand, the number of the British troops in Canada. Again, if I am not mistaken, four thousand was the allotment of foreign troops for the northern department. As the sickness spoken of fell chiefly upon them, they, in all probability, lost more in that way than they have gained in recruits. But, even if this were not the case, they cannot exceed the original number—four thousand added to three thousand make seven thousand. Besides these, there are the grenadiers and light infantry. Of these there cannot be above eighteen companies each, which, allowing them to contain every one fifty men, amount to eighteen hundred—and this brings them to about eight thousand eight hundred men in their whole force of British and foreign troops. Of these, at least one sixth must be unfit for duty, by every calculation, which reduces the number of men fit for the field to about seven thousand five hundred. Part of these must be left in Canada, if it were for no other purpose than to guard their maga-

zines, and for other duty of that kind. Nor could they with safety commit the charge of those things to the Canadians, many of whom are notoriously disaffected, and would be very likely to destroy instead of preserve them. From this view, which I verily believe is too favorable to them, they cannot bring more than between six and seven thousand British and foreign troops to act out of Canada. Out of these six or seven thousand, a considerable part must be left to garrison Ticonderoga, and secure their rear in case of accidents; for they could not without madness attempt to advance, and leave the posts behind them in a defenceless state; and they may be obliged to increase their attention to this matter by keeping a body of men somewhere about the Grants,[1] which has been recommended. When this last deduction is made, Burgoyne cannot advance with more than between five and six thousand men, to suppose him to act with his whole collective force; except Canadians and Indians, who are not, by any accounts, numerous.

Let us now take a view of our own force. When Glover's brigade gets up, and the recruits for the regiments there, now on their march, arrive, General Schuyler will have about five thousand Continental troops. Surely the Eastern States cannot sleep so soundly, when the danger is so imminent, but that they will reinforce him with eight or ten thousand militia. If this happens, and he cannot stop General Burgoyne's progress, it must proceed from other causes than the want of men. With about the same

[1] The New Hampshire Grants in what is now Vermont.

army last year, General Washington kept Howe with sixteen or seventeen thousand men at bay.

Perhaps it may be said, there will not be time to collect this force, as the enemy are advancing with very great rapidity. I am much mistaken if there will not be abundant time. The nature of the ground; the difficulty of transporting the immense quantity of baggage, provisions, etc., necessary to accompany an army of five thousand men penetrating an enemy's country; the want of wagons for the purpose; the impediments thrown in their way by cutting up the roads—all these obstacles will retard their march much more than is at first sight imagined, and will give full time to prepare them a good reception.

On the whole, I am clearly of opinion, that unless Howe co-operates with Burgoyne against your State, it has very little to fear; and I even doubt, if he goes to the southward, whether Burgoyne will attempt to penetrate far. At present there is every appearance of a southern expedition. Seventy sail of the enemy's fleet have been seen passing by Little Egg Harbor, making short tacks towards the Capes of Philadelphia. Three divisions of the army are arrived here and at Howel's Ferry, four miles up. One is coming on by way of Princeton, etc. Another coming after us by way of Morristown. I wish this last to halt there. Two brigades more have been ordered to cross the North River and wait further orders. We shall not, however, pass the Deleware till we hear of the arrival of the enemy in the Capes of Philadelphia. Nor will those two brigades be ordered

on till the same event takes place. We shall act the most cautious part possible in our circumstances. I communicated your letter to the General. He agrees with me in point of the enemy's numbers. With respect to animating the Eastern States, he has written the most urgent letter to their several assemblies, which I am in hopes will answer the end you propose from sending persons to each of them.

It were to be wished your forts and ships were well supplied with cannon; but it is wholly out of the General's line to strip the ships to the eastward of their cannon for that purpose. If your Convention were to make application to the Congress or Board of War, it *might* succeed; but I should have very little hope of it.

TO ROBERT R. LIVINGSTON

HEADQUARTERS, CAMP AT CROSS ROADS, Aug. 18, 1777.

MY DEAR SIR:

I most sincerely and heartily sympathize with you in the distress and danger under which your State is laboring at this critical period. I lament its misfortunes, as they are wounds to the common cause, as they more nearly interest those for whom I feel the warmest regard, and as they are suffered by a State which I consider in a great measure as my political parent. I wish any thing in my power could contribute to its relief.

I am fully sensible, with you, that Mr. Burgoyne's successes involve the most important consequences to America, and that a further progress in your State

may bring on all the evils you delineate, and most deeply affect the common cause. I agree with you that the loss of your State will be a more afflicting blow to America than any that could be struck by Mr. Howe to the southward; and I can assure you it is regarded in the same light by others whose thoughts of the matter are of much more consequence than my own. I may also add that his Excellency has afforded the northern army all the assistance he could in his circumstances give, with the least degree of propriety, and were you as well acquainted with those circumstances as I am, you would be perfectly convinced of the truth of what I assert.

Though I have differed, and still differ, and, I believe, on the most substantial grounds, with you, as to the numbers of the enemy, yet I clearly perceive, from the spirit reigning in our army, and from the unpardonable backwardness of your eastern neighbors, that you have every thing to fear, notwithstanding your most strenuous exertions, which, to the honor of your State, are justly admired, as far surpassing what might naturally be expected from you under so many discouragements. I am so thoroughly impressed with your true situation, that I am fully of opinion, if Burgoyne is not speedily checked in his career, he will become the first object to this army, especially if Howe operates so far to the southward, as every appearance seems to indicate. Charleston is now thought to be the place of his destination. He has been seen passing Sinopuxent,[1] steering southward, twelve days ago; and,

[1] Sinopuxent Bay on the coast of Maryland.

as he has not been since heard of, 't is concluded he must be bound pretty far in that course, and no object short of Charleston is supposed at all worthy his attention. However common sense is against Mr. Howe's going so far to the southward, facts are so strongly in favor of it, that we must give credit to them. It is an inadmissible supposition, that he can be keeping a large fleet so long at sea merely as a feint, or that he would steer so far out of his way, if he really intended to operate to the northward; the more as the season is at hand when he would be liable to heavy gusts on the southern shores and contrary winds on his return.

If he goes so far southward, we cannot think of following him with this army; and if Burgoyne continues to penetrate, we must find means to stop him. This will point out the propriety of uniting this with the northern army, and falling upon him with their joint force; and perhaps nothing is more to be wished than that affairs should run into this train.

Before this reaches you, you will be informed that two regiments have gone from Peekskill to reinforce the northern army, and that Morgan's corps of riflemen are on their march for the same purpose. They left Trenton yesterday morning, and as they march light, and vessels are ordered to be ready waiting for them at Peekskill, they will soon be at the place of their destination. It has been my wish and endeavor for some time past that this corps might be sent to your assistance. I expect much from them; they are a picked corps, well-used to rifles and to wood-fights, commanded by officers of

distinguished bravery, and have been very serviceable in frequent skirmishes with the enemy. I dare say these people will soon chastise the forwardness of the Indians, and I should not be surprised if, after a little time, they make them desert their British friends. Their known inconstancy and want of perseverance give great reason to hope a few drubbings will exceedingly discourage them and send the greatest part of them home. From every account, I am led to believe our misfortunes are greatly owing to a panic dread of the Indian. If this be so, the presence of Morgan's corps will not fail to have the most happy effect. It would be well to propagate through the country and army such ideas of this corps as will tend to revive the spirits of both inhabitants and soldiers. If their number, which is about five hundred, should be exaggerated it would do no harm. But of all things, my dear sir, let every topic be carefully avoided that may tend to breed jealousies between this corps and the northern troops. Such jealousies have been, are, and will be more detrimental to our affairs than any thing besides.

I communicated your letter to his Excellency.

P. S.—Your express not calling on his return was the sole reason of your not receiving a letter from me; I had written one to go by him.

His Excellency desires his particular respects to you, and assures you that nothing in his power will be left undone for your assistance.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

HEADQUARTERS, WILMINGTON, Sept. 1, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

Agreeable to the intention of the council, I have delivered their inclosed letter to his Excellency, who, after perusing it, has sealed and forwarded it to Mr. Hancock.

The relieving Fort Schuyler is a very happy and important event, and will concur with the two happy strokes given by Herkimer and Stark, to reverse the face of affairs and turn the scale against Mr. Burgoyne. I hope Captain Montgomery's suggestions may be right as to his being obliged to advance; but I fancy, if he once thinks it unsafe, he will not be bound by such an empty punctilio as to risk the destruction of his army. As General Howe is now fairly sat down to the southward, the eastern States, no longer under any apprehensions from him, will be disposed, I am in hopes, to exert their whole force; and if they do, I shall wonder at it if Mr. Burgoyne advances with impunity.

Before this reaches you, you will have heard of General Howe's coming into Chesapeake Bay, where he has landed his whole army, within about four miles of the head of Elk; a day or two after his landing, he marched from his first position and extended his van as far as Green Hills. He still lies there in a state of inactivity, in a great measure, I believe, from the want of horses to transport his baggage and stores. It seems he sailed with only about three weeks' provender, and was six at sea; this has occasioned the death of a great many of his horses, and

has made skeletons of the rest. He will be obliged to collect a supply from the neighboring country before he can move, unless he should be disposed to make a more hazardous movement than he would ever be able to justify except by a degree of success he has no right to expect.

The main body of our army is encamped on the heights of Wilmington, so as to cover the town. We have strong parties of light troops and militia advanced towards the enemy, who have frequent skirmishes with them of little consequence, and often pick up a few prisoners. We have taken at least seventy since they landed, and have had thirty deserters. This country does not abound in good posts. It is intersected by such an infinity of roads, and is so little mountainous, that it is impossible to find a spot not liable to capital defects. The one we now have is, all things considered, the best we could find; but there is no great dependence to be put upon it. The enemy will have Philadelphia if they dare make a bold push for it, unless we fight them a pretty general action. I opine we ought to do it, and that we shall beat them soundly if we do. The militia seem pretty generally stirring. Our army is in high health and spirits. We shall, I hope, have twice the enemy's numbers. I would not only fight them, but I would attack them; for I hold it an established maxim, that there is three to one in favor of the party attacking.

TO THE HONORABLE JOHN HANCOCK PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

September 18, 1777.

SIR:

If Congress have not left Philadelphia they ought to do it immediately without fail ; for the enemy have the means of throwing a party this night into the city. I just now passed the Valley Forge—in doing which a party of the enemy came down and fired upon us in the boat, by which means I lost my horse—one man was killed, and another wounded. The boats were abandoned, and will fall into their hands. I did all I could to prevent this, but to no purpose.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

September 18, 1777, 9 o'clock at night.

SIR:

I did myself the honor to write you a hasty line this evening, giving it as my opinion that the city was no longer a place of safety for you. I write you again, lest that letter should not get to hand. The enemy are on the road to Swedes Ford, the main body about four miles from it. They sent a party this evening to Daviser's ferry, which fired upon me and some others in crossing it, killed one man, wounded another, and disabled my horse.

They came on so suddenly, that one boat was left adrift on the other side, which will of course fall into their hands; and, by the help of that, they will get possession of another, which was abandoned by those who had the direction of it, and left afloat, in

spite of every thing I could do to the contrary. These two boats will convey fifty men across at a time, so that in a few hours they may throw over a large party, perhaps sufficient to overmatch the militia who may be between them and the city. This renders the situation of Congress extremely precarious, if they are not on their guard; my apprehensions for them are great, though it is not improbable they may not be realized.

The most cogent reasons oblige me to join the army this night, or I should have waited upon you myself. I am in hopes our army will be up with the enemy before they pass Schuylkill: if they are, something serious will ensue.

TO THE PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 22, 1777.

SIR:

I left camp last evening, and came to the city to superintend the collection of blankets and clothing for the army. Mr. Lovell [1] sends to inform me that there is an express going off to Congress; and I do myself the honor to communicate a brief state of things when I left camp. The enemy moved yesterday, from where they lay opposite to Valley Forge, etc., higher up the river, on their old scheme of gaining our right. I don't know precisely where they halted; but our army was preparing to move up also, to counteract them.

I am this morning told they marched about twelve

[1] James Lovell of Massachusetts, at this time member of Congress.

o'clock at night for that purpose. The general opinion was that the enemy would attempt crossing this day; every appearance justified the supposition.

We had intelligence that the enemy had, the night before last, surprised Generals Smallwood and Wayne, and consequently dispersed them, after a small opposition. The loss, it is said, was not great: and our troops were re-assembling fast at the Red Lion. This seems to have been a bad look out, and is somewhat disconcerting.

By a letter from General McDougal, received this morning, it appears he was, on the twentieth, in the morning, at Second River, just setting out on his march toward Woodbridge. He is pressing forward with all possible expedition. The troops were pretty well refreshed, and in good spirits.

TO WASHINGTON

HEADQUARTERS, FISHKILL, Nov. 2, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I lodged last night in the neighborhood of New Windsor. This morning early, I met Col. Morgan with his corps, about a mile from it, in march for headquarters. I told him the necessity of making all the dispatch he could, so as not to fatigue his men too much, which he has promised to do.

I understood from Col. Morgan that all the northern army were marching down on both sides the river, and would probably be to-morrow at New Windsor and this place, and that General Putnam had held a council for the general disposition of

them, in which it was resolved to send you four thousand men and to keep the rest on this side the river. I came here in expectation that matters were in such a train as to enable me to accomplish my errand without going any farther; unless it should be to hasten the troops that were on their march. But on my arrival I learned from Mr. Hughes, an aid-de-camp of General Gates, that the following disposition of the northern army had taken place.

General Patterson's, Glover's, and Nixon's brigades, and Colonel Warner's mountain boys, to remain in and about Albany; barracks building for them. General Poor's brigade, marching down this side of the river to join General Putnam, will be here probably to-morrow. General Larned's brigade, Morgan's corps, Warner's brigade of Massachusetts militia, and some regiments of New York militia, on their march on the west side of the river.

I have directed General Putnam, in your name, to send forward with all dispatch to join you the two Continental brigades and Warner's militia brigade. This last is to serve till the latter end of this month. Your instructions did not comprehend any militia, but as there are certain accounts here that most of the troops from New York are going to reinforce General Howe, and as so large a proportion of Continental troops have been detained at Albany, I concluded you would not disapprove of a measure calculated to strengthen you, though but for a small time, and have ventured to adopt it on that presumption.

Being informed by General Putnam that General

Winds, with seven hundred Jersey militia, were at King's Ferry, with intention to cross to Peekskill, I prevailed upon him to relinquish that idea and send off an immediate order for them to march toward Redbank. It is possible, however, unless your Excellency supports this order by an application from yourself, he may march his men home instead of to the place he has been directed to repair to.

Neither Lee's, Jackson's regiments, nor the detachments belonging to General McDougal's division, have yet marched. I have pressed their being sent, and an order has been dispatched for their instantly proceeding. Colonel Hughes is pressing some fresh horses for me. The moment they are ready I shall recross the river in order to fall in with the troops on the other side, and make all the haste I can to Albany to get the three brigades there sent forward.

Will your Excellency permit me to observe that I have some doubts, under present circumstances and appearances, of the propriety of leaving the regiments proposed to be left in this quarter? But if my doubts on this subject were stronger than they are, I am forbid, by the sense of council, from interfering in the matter.

General Poor's brigade is just arrived here; they will proceed to join you with all expedition. So strongly am I impressed with the importance of endeavoring to crush Mr. Howe, that I am apt to think it would be advisable to draw off all the Continental troops. Had this been determined on, General Warner's sixteen hundred militia might have been left here.

TO WASHINGTON

ALBANY, November, 1777.

DEAR SIR:

I arrived here yesterday at noon, and waited upon General Gates immediately, on the business of my mission, but was sorry to find that his ideas did not correspond with yours for drawing off the number of troops you directed. I used every argument in my power to convince him of the propriety of the measure, but he was inflexible in the opinion that two brigades at least of Continental troops should remain in and near this place. His reasons were that the intelligence of Sir Harry Clinton's having gone to join Burgoyne was not sufficiently authenticated to put it out of doubt; that there was therefore a possibility of his returning up the river, which might expose the finest arsenal in America (as he calls the one here) to destruction, should this place be left so bare of troops as I proposed, and that the want of conveniences and the difficulty of the roads would make it impossible to remove artillery and stores for a considerable time; that the New England States would be left open to the depredations and ravages of the enemy; that it would put it out of his power to enterprise any thing against Ticonderoga, which he thinks might be done in the winter and which he considers it of importance to undertake.

The force of these reasons did by no means strike me, and I did every thing in my power to show they were unsubstantial, but all I could effect was to have one brigade dispatched in addition to those already marched. I found myself infinitely embarrassed,

and was at a loss how to act. I felt the importance of strengthening you as much as possible, but, on the other hand, I found insuperable inconveniences in acting diametrically opposite to the opinion of a gentleman whose successes have raised him to the highest importance. General Gates has won the entire confidence of the Eastern States; if disposed to do it, by addressing himself to the prejudices of the people he would find no difficulty to render a measure odious which it might be said, with plausibility enough to be believed, was calculated to expose them to unnecessary danger, notwithstanding their exertions during the campaign had given them the fullest title to repose and security. General Gates has influence and interest elsewhere; he might use it if he pleased to discredit the measure there also. On the whole, it appears to me dangerous to insist on sending more troops from hence while General Gates appears so warmly to oppose it. Should any accident or inconvenience happen in consequence of it, there would be too fair a pretext for censure, and many people are too well disposed to lay hold of it. At any rate it might be considered as using him ill to take a step so contrary to his judgment in a case of this nature. These considerations, and others I shall be more explicit in when I have the pleasure of seeing you, determined me not to insist upon sending either of the other brigades remaining here. I am afraid what I have done may not meet with your approbation, as not being perhaps fully warranted by your instructions, but I ventured to do what I thought right, hoping that at

least the goodness of my intention will excuse the error of my judgment.

I was induced to this relaxation the more readily, as I had directed to be sent on two thousand militia, which were not expected by you, and a thousand Continental troops out of those proposed to be left with General Putnam, which I have written to him, since I found how matters were circumstanced here, to forward to you with all dispatch. I did this for several reasons: because your reinforcement would be more expeditious from that place than from this, because two thousand Continental troops at Peekskill will not be wanted in its present circumstances, especially as it was really necessary to have a body of Continental troops at this place for the security of the valuable stores here, and I should not, if I had my wish, think it expedient to draw off more than two of the three brigades now here. This being the case, one of the ends you proposed to be answered by leaving the ten regiments with General Putnam, will be equally answered by the troops here—I mean that of covering and fortifying the Eastern States,—and one thousand Continental troops, in addition to the militia collected and that may be collected there, will be sufficient in the Highlands for covering the country down that way and carrying on the works necessary to be raised for the defence of the river.

The troops gone and going to reinforce you are near five thousand rank and file Continental troops, and two thousand five hundred Massachusetts and New Hampshire militia. These and the seven hundred Jersey militia will be a larger reinforcement

than you expected, though not quite an equal number of Continental troops, nor exactly in the way directed. General Lincoln tells me the militia are very excellent; and, though their time will be out by the last of this month, you will be able, if you think proper, to order the troops still remaining here to join you by the time their term of service expires.

I cannot forbear being uneasy, lest my conduct should prove displeasing to you; but I have done what, considering all circumstances, appeared to me most eligible and prudent.

Vessels are preparing to carry the brigade to New Windsor, which will embark this evening. I shall this afternoon set out on my return to camp, and on my way shall endeavor to hasten the troops forward.

TO GENERAL GATES

Albany, November 5, 1777.

Sir:

By inquiry I have learned that General Patterson's brigade, which is the one you propose to send, is by far the weakest of the three now here, and does not consist of more than about six hundred rank and file fit for duty. It is true that there is a militia regiment with it of about two hundred, but the term of service for which this regiment is engaged is so near expiring, that it would be past by the time the men could arrive at the place of their destination.

Under these circumstances, I cannot consider it either as compatible with the good of the service or my instructions from his Excellency, General

Washington, to consent that that brigade be selected from the three to go to him; but I am under the necessity of desiring, by virtue of my orders from him, that one of the others be substituted instead of this,—either General Nixon's or General Glover's, —and that you will be pleased to give immediate orders for its embarkation.

Knowing that General Washington wished me to pay the greatest deference to your judgment, I ventured so far to deviate from the instructions he gave me, as to consent, in compliance with your opinion, that two brigades should remain here instead of one. At the same time, permit me to observe, that I am not myself sensible of the expediency of keeping more than one with the detached regiments in the neighborhood of this place, and that my ideas coincide with those gentlemen whom I have consulted on the occasion, whose judgment I have much more reliance upon than on my own, and who must be supposed to have a thorough knowledge of all the circumstances. Their opinion is that one brigade and the regiments before mentioned would amply answer the purposes of this post. When I preferred your opinion to other considerations, I did not imagine you would pitch upon a brigade little more than half as large as the others; and, finding this to be the case, I indispensably owe it to my duty to desire, in his Excellency's name, that another may go instead of the one intended, and without loss of time. As it may be conducive to dispatch to send Glover's brigade, if agreeable to you, you will give orders accordingly.

TO WASHINGTON

New Windsor, Nov. 10, 1777.

Dear Sir:

I arrived here last night from Albany. Having given General Gates a little time to recollect himself, I renewed my remonstrances on the necessity and propriety of sending you more than one brigade of the three he had detained with him, and finally prevailed upon him to give orders for Glover's, in addition to Patterson's brigade, to march this way.

As it was thought conducive to expedition to send the troops by water as far as it could be done, I procured all the vessels that could be had at Albany fit for the purpose, but could not get more than sufficient to take Patterson's brigade. It was embarked the 7th instant, and I expected would have been here before this, but the wind has been contrary; they must in all probability be here to-day. General Glover's brigade marched at the same time on the east side of the river, the roads being much better than on this side. I am at this moment informed that one sloop with a part of Patterson's is arrived and that the others are in sight. They will immediately proceed by water to King's Ferry, and thence take the shortest route to you.

I am pained beyond expression to inform your Excellency that on my arrival here I find every thing has been neglected and deranged by General Putnam, and that the two brigades—Poor's and Larned's—still remain here and on the other side of the river at Fishkill. Colonel Warner's militia, I am told, have been drawn to Peekskill to aid in an expedition

against New York, which, it seems, is at this time the hobby-horse with General Putnam. Not the least attention has been paid to my order in your name for a detachment of one thousand men from the troops hitherto stationed at this post. Every thing is sacrificed to the whim of taking New York.

The two brigades of Poor and Larned it appears would not march for want of money and necessaries; several of the regiments having received no pay for six or eight months past. There has been a high mutiny among the former on this account, in which a captain killed a man, and was himself shot by his comrade. These difficulties, for want of proper management, have stopped the troops from proceeding. Governor Clinton has been the only man who has done any thing towards removing them; but, for want of General Putnam's co-operation, has not been able to effect it. He has only been able to prevail with Larned's brigade to agree to march to Goshen, in hopes, by getting them once on the go, to get them to continue their march. On coming here I immediately sent for Colonel Bailey, who now commands Larned's brigade. Have gotten him to engage for carrying the brigade on to headquarters as fast as possible. This he expects to effect by mean of five or six thousand dollars, which Governor Clinton was kind enough to borrow for me, and which Colonel Bailey thinks will keep the men in good humor till they join you. They marched this morning towards Goshen.

I shall as soon as possible see General Poor, and

do every thing in my power to get him along, and hope I shall be able to succeed.

The plan I before laid having been totally deranged a new one has become necessary. It is now too late to send Warner's militia. By the time they get to you their term of service would be out. The motive for sending them, which was to give you a speedy reinforcement, has by the past delay been superseded.

By Governor Clinton's advice, I have sent an order in the most emphatic terms to General Putnam immediately to dispatch all the Continental troops under him to your assistance and to detain the militia instead of them.

My opinion is that the only present use for troops in this quarter is to protect the country from the depredations of little plundering parties, and for carrying on the works necessary for the defence of the river. Nothing more ought to be thought of. 'T is only wasting time and misapplying men to employ them in a suicidal parade against New York, for in this it will undoubtedly terminate. New York is no object if it could be taken, and to take it would require more men than could be spared from more substantial purposes. Governor Clinton's ideas coincide with mine. He thinks that there is no need of more Continental troops here than a few to give a spur to the militia in working upon the fortifications. In pursuance of this I have given the directions before mentioned. If General Putnam attends to them, the troops under him may be with you nearly as early as any of the others (though he has

unluckily, marched them down to Tarrytown), and General Glover's brigade, when it gets up, will be more than sufficient to answer the true end of this post.

If your Excellency agrees with me in opinion, it will be well to send instant directions to General Putnam, to pursue the object I have mentioned; for I doubt whether he will attend to any thing I shall say, notwithstanding it comes in the shape of a positive order. I fear, unless you interpose, the works here will go on so feebly, for want of men, that they will not be completed in time; whereas it appears to me of the greatest importance they should be pushed with the utmost vigor. Governor Clinton will do every thing in his power. I wish General Putnam was recalled from the command of this post, and Governor Clinton would accept it. The blunders and caprices of the former are endless. Believe me, sir, nobody can be more impressed with the importance of forwarding the reinforcements coming to you, with all speed, nor could any body have endeavored more to promote it than I have done; but the *ignorance* of some, and the *design* of others, have been almost insuperable obstacles. I am very unwell; but I shall not spare myself to get things immediately in a proper train; and for that purpose intend, unless I receive other orders from you, to continue with the troops in the progress of their march. As soon as I get General Poor's brigade in march, I shall proceed to General Putnam's at Peekskill.

TO WASHINGTON

New Windsor, Nov. 12, 1777.

Dear Sir:

I have been detained here these two days, by a fever and violent rheumatic pains throughout my body. This has prevented my being active in person for promoting the purposes of my errand; but I have taken every other method in my power, in which Governor Clinton has obligingly given me all the aid he could. In answer to my pressing application to General Poor for the immediate marching of his brigade, I was told they were under an operation for the itch; which made it impossible for them to proceed till the effects of it were over. By a letter, however, of yesterday, General Poor informs me he would certainly march this morning. I must do him the justice to say, he appears solicitous to join you; and that I believe the past delay is not owing to any fault of his, but is wholly chargeable on General Putnam. Indeed, sir, I owe it to the service to say, that every part of this gentleman's conduct is marked with blunder and negligence, and gives general disgust.

Parson's brigade will join you, I hope, in five or six days from this. Larned's may do the same. Poor's will, I am persuaded, make all the haste they can for the future, and Glover's may be expected at Fishkill to-night, whence they will be pressed forward as fast as I can have any influence to make them go; but I am sorry to say, the disposition for marching, in the officers and men in general, of these troops, does not

keep pace with my wishes or the exigency of the occasion. They have, unfortunately, imbibed an idea that they have done their part of the business of the campaign, and are now entitled to repose. This and the want of pay make them averse to a long march at this advanced season.

A letter from you to General Putnam, of the 9th, fell just now into my hands. As it might possibly contain something useful to me, I took the liberty of opening it and after reading it, immediately dispatched it to him. If he has paid any attention to my last letters to him, things will be in a right train for executing the order in yours; but whether he has or not is a matter of doubt.

In a letter from him just now received by Governor Clinton, he appears to have been, the 10th instant, at King's Street, at the White Plains. I have had no answer to my last applications. The enemy appear to have stripped New York very bare. The people there—that is, the Tories, are in a very great fright. This adds to my anxiety, that the reinforcements from this quarter to you are not in greater forwardness and more considerable.

I have written to General Gates, informing him of the accounts of the situation of New York with respect to troops, and the probability of the force gone to Howe being greater than was at first expected—to try if this will not *extort* from him a further reinforcement. I don't, however, expect much from him; as he pretends to have in view an expedition against Ticonderoga, to be undertaken in the winter, and he knows that, under the sanction of this idea,

calculated to catch the Eastern people, he may, without censure, retain the troops. And as I shall be under a necessity of speaking plainly to your Excellency, when I have the pleasure of seeing you, I shall not hesitate to say, I doubt whether you would have had a man from the Northern army, if the whole could have been kept at Albany with any decency. Perhaps you will think me blamable in not having exercised the powers you gave me, and given a positive order. Perhaps I have been so; but, deliberately weighing all circumstances, I did not and do not think it advisable to do so.

TO GENERAL GATES

FISHKILL, Nov. 12, 1777.

SIR:

Ever since my arrival in this quarter, I have been endeavoring to collect the best idea I could of the state of things in New York, in order the better to form a judgment of the probable reinforcement gone to General Howe. On the whole, this is a fact well ascertained, that New York has been stripped as bare as possible; that in consequence of this, the few troops there and the inhabitants are under so strong apprehensions of an attack, as almost to amount to a *panic;* that to supply the deficiency of men, every effort is making to excite the citizens to arms for the defence of the city. For this purpose, the public papers are full of addresses to them, that plainly speak the apprehensions prevailing on the occasion.

Hence I infer, that a formidable force is gone to

General Howe. The calculations made by those who have had the best opportunities of judging carry the number from six to seven thousand. If so, the number gone and going to General Washington is far inferior; five thousand at the utmost. The militia were all detained by General Putnam till it became too late to send them.

The state of things I gave you when I had the pleasure of seeing you, was, to the best of my knowledge, sacredly true. I give you the present information, that you may decide whether any further succor can with propriety come from you.

The fleet, with the troops on board, sailed out of the Hook the 5th instant. This circumstance demonstrates, beyond the possibility of doubt, that it is General Howe's fixed intention to endeavor to hold Philadelphia at all hazards; and removes all danger of any further operations up the North River this winter. Otherwise, Sir Harry Clinton's movement, at this advanced season, is altogether inexplicable.

If you can with propriety afford any further assistance, the most expeditious manner of conveying it will be to acquaint General Putnam of it, that he may send on the troops with him, to be replaced by them. You, sir, best know the uses to which the troops with you are to be applied, and will determine accordingly. I am certain it is not his Excellency's wish to frustrate any plan you may have in view for the benefit of the service, so far as it can possibly be avoided, consistent with a due attention to more important objects.

TO WASHINGTON

Mr. Kennedy's House, Peekskill, Nov. 15, 1777.

Sir:

I arrived at this place last night, and unfortunately find myself unable to proceed any further. Imagining I had gotten the better of my complaint, which confined me at Governor Clinton's, and anxious to be about attending to the march of the troops, the day before yesterday I crossed the ferry, in order to fall in with General Glover's brigade, which was on its march from Poughkeepsie to Fishkill. I did not, however, see it myself, but received a letter from Colonel Shepherd, who commands the brigade, informing me he would be last night at Fishkill and this night at King's Ferry. Wagons, etc., are provided on the other side for his accommodation, so that there need be no delay but what is voluntary, and I believe Colonel Shepherd is as well disposed as could be wished to hasten his march. General Poor's brigade crossed the ferry the day before yesterday. Two York regiments—Courtland's and Livingston's—are with them. They were unwilling to be separated from the brigade and the brigade from them. General Putnam was unwilling to keep them with him; and if he had consented to do it, the regiments to replace them would not join you within six days as soon as these. The troops now remaining with General Putnam will amount to about the number you intended, though they are not exactly the same. He has detached Colonel Charles Webb's regiment to you. He *says* the troops with him are not in a condition to march, being destitute of shoes, stockings,

and other necessaries; but I believe the true reasons of his being unwilling to pursue the mode pointed out by you were his aversion to the York troops and his desire to retain General Parsons with him.

TO GENERAL PUTNAM

December 9, 1777.

SIR:

I cannot forbear confessing that I am astonished and alarmed beyond measure to find that all his Excellency's views have been hitherto frustrated, and that no single step of those I mentioned to you has been taken to afford him the aid he absolutely stands in need of, and by delaying which the cause of America is put to the utmost conceivable hazard. I so fully explained to you the general's situation that I could not entertain a doubt that you would make it the first object of your attention to reinforce him with that speed the exigency of affairs demanded, but I am sorry to say he will have too much reason to think other objects—in comparison with that, insignificant—have been uppermost. I speak freely and emphatically, because I tremble at the consequence of the delay that has happened. General Clinton's reinforcement is probably by this time with Mr. Howe. This will give him a decisive superiority over our army. What may be the issue of such a state of things I leave to the feelings of every friend to his country capable of foreseeing consequences. My expressions may perhaps have more warmth than is altogether proper, but they proceed from the

overflowing of my heart, in a matter where I conceive this continent essentially interested. I wrote to you from Albany and desired you would send a thousand Continental troops of those first proposed to be left with you. This I understand has not been done. How the non-compliance can be answered to General Washington you can best determine. I now, sir, in the most explicit terms, by his Excellency's authority, give it as a positive order from him, that all the Continental troops under your command may be immediately marched to King's Ferry, there to cross the river and hasten to reinforce the army under him. The Massachusetts militia are to be detained instead of them until the troops coming from the northward arrive. When they do they will replace, as far as I am instructed, the troops you shall send away in consequence of this requisition. The general's idea of keeping troops this way does not extend farther than covering the country from any little irruptions of small parties and carrying on the works necessary for the security of the river. As to attacking New York, that he thinks ought to be out of the question at present. If men could be spared from the other really necessary objects, he would have no objection to attempting a diversion by way of New York, but nothing further. As the times of the Massachusetts and New Hampshire militia will soon expire, it will be proper to call in time for a reinforcement from Connecticut. Governor Clinton will do all in his power to promote objects in which the state he commands in is so immediately concerned. Generals Glover's and Patterson's

brigades are on their way down. The number of Continental troops necessary for this post will be furnished out of them. I cannot but have the fullest confidence you will use your utmost exertions to execute the business of this letter. And I am, with great respect, sir, your most obedient servant.[1]

TO GOVERNOR GEORGE CLINTON [2]

HEADQUARTERS, Feb. 13, 1778.

DEAR SIR:

I did myself the honor of writing to you immediately after my arrival at headquarters, in answer to two letters I found here from you.

There is a matter which often obtrudes itself upon my mind, and which requires the attention of every person of sense and prudence among us—I mean a degeneracy of representation in the great council of America. It is a melancholy truth, sir, the effects of which we daily see and feel, that there is not so much wisdom in a certain body as there ought to be, and as the success of our affairs absolutely demands. Many members of it are, no doubt, men in every respect fit for the trust, but this cannot be said of it as a body. Folly, caprice, a want of foresight, comprehension, and dignity characterize the general tenor

[1] Reprinted from Hamilton's *History of the Republic*, i., p. 348.

[2] I owe this and the other letters to be given subsequently from the Clinton papers, to the kindness of Mr. Henry A. Homes, State Librarian at Albany, and to the late Judge Clinton, editor of the Clinton papers. This letter was published by the *New York Herald* in a pamphlet entitled "Clinton Correspondence," in 1842, and is now reprinted from the Clinton papers in the possession of the State of New York.

of their action. Of this, I dare say, you are sensible, though you have not, perhaps, so many opportunities of knowing it as I have. Their conduct, with respect to the army especially, is feeble, indecisive, and improvident—insomuch that we are reduced to a more terrible situation than you can conceive. False and contracted views of economy have prevented them, though repeatedly urged to it, from making that provision for officers which was requisite to interest them in the service, which has produced such carelessness and indifference to the service as is subversive to every officer-like quality. They have disgusted the army by repeated instances of the most whimsical favoritism in their promotions, and by an absurd prodigality of rank to foreigners and to the meanest staff of the army. They have not been able to summon resolution enough to withstand the impudent importunity and vain boasting of foreign pretenders, but have manifested such a ductility and inconsistency in their proceedings as will warrant the charge of suffering themselves to be bullied by every petty rascal who comes armed with ostentatious pretensions of military merit and experience. Would you believe it, sir, it is become almost proverbial in the mouths of the French officers and other foreigners, that they have nothing more to do to obtain whatever they please than to assume a high tone and assert their own merit with confidence and perseverance? These things wound my feelings as a Republican more than I can express, and in some degree make me contemptible in my own eyes.

By injudicious changes and arrangements in the

middle of a campaign, they have exposed the army frequently to temporary want, and to the danger of dissolution from absolute famine. At this very day there are complaints from the whole line of having been three or four days without provisions; desertions have been immense, and strong features of mutiny begin to show themselves. It is indeed to be wondered at that the soldiery have manifested so unparalleled a degree of patience as they have. If effectual measures are not speedily adopted I know not how we shall keep the army together or make another campaign.

I omit saying any thing of the want of clothing for the army. It may be disputed whether more could have been done than has been done.

If you look into their conduct in the civil line you will equally discover a deficiency of energy, dignity, and extensiveness of views; but of this you can better judge than myself, and it is unnecessary to particularize.

America once had a representation that would do honor to any age or nation. The present falling off is very alarming and dangerous. What is the cause? or how is it to be remedied?—are questions that the welfare of these States requires should be well attended to. The great men who composed our first council; are they dead, have they deserted the cause, or what has become of them? Very few are dead and still fewer have deserted the cause; they are all, except the few who still remain in Congress, either in the field or in the civil offices of their respective States; for the greater part are engaged in the latter.

The only remedy then is to take them out of these employments and return them to the place where their presence is infinitely more important.

Each State, in order to promote its own external government and prosperity, has selected its best members to fill the offices within itself, and conduct its own affairs. Men have been fonder of the emoluments and conveniences of being employed at home; and local attachment falsely operating has made them more provident for the particular interests of the State to which they belonged, than for the common interests of the Confederacy. This is a most pernicious mistake and must be corrected. However important it is to give form and efficiency to your interior constitutions and police, it is infinitely more important to have a wise general council; otherwise a failure of the measures of the Union will overwhelm all your labors for the advancement of your particular good, and ruin the common cause. You should not beggar the councils of the United States to enrich the administration of the several members. Realize to yourself the consequence of having a Congress despised at home and abroad. How can the common force be exerted if the power of collecting it be put in weak, foolish, and unsteady hands? How can we hope for success in our European negotiations, if the nations of Europe have no confidence in the wisdom and vigor of the great Continental Government? This is the object on which their eyes are fixed; hence it is, America will derive its importance or insignificance in their estimation.

Arguments to you, sir, need not be multiplied to

enforce the necessity of having a good general council; neither do I think we shall very widely differ as to the fact that the present is very far from being such.

The sentiments I have advanced are not fit for the vulgar ear; and circumstanced as I am now, I should with caution utter them except to those in whom I may place an entire confidence. But it is time that men of weight and understanding should take the alarm, and excite each other to a proper remedy. For my part, my insignificance allows me to do nothing more than to hint my apprehensions to those of that description who are pleased to favor me with their confidence. In this view I write to you.

As far as I can judge, the remarks I have made do not apply to your State nearly so much as to the other twelve. You have a Duane, a Morris, and, may I not add, a Duer? But why do you not send your Jay, and your R. R. Livingston? I wish General Schuyler was either explicitly in the army or in Congress. For yourself, sir, though I mean no compliments, you must not be spared from where you are.

But the design of this letter is not so much that you may use your influence in improving or enlarging your own representation, as in discreetly giving the alarm to other States through the medium of your confidential friends. Indeed, sir, it is necessary there should be a change. America will shake to its centre if there is not.

You and I had some conversation when I had the pleasure of seeing you last, with respect to the existence of a certain faction. Since I saw you I have

discovered such convincing traits of the monster that I cannot doubt its reality in the most extensive sense. I dare say you have heard enough to settle the matter in your own mind. I believe it unmasked its batteries too soon, and begins to hide its head; but as I imagine it will only change the storm to a sap, all the true and sensible friends to their country, and of course to a certain great man, ought to be upon the watch to counterplot the secret machinations of his enemies. Have you heard any thing of Conway's [1] history? He is one of the vermin bred in the entrails of his chimera dire, and there does not exist a more villainous calumniator and incendiary. He is gone to Albany on a certain expedition.[2]

TO GOVERNOR GEORGE CLINTON [3]

HEADQUARTERS, March 12, 1778.

SIR:

Captain Coleman delivered me your two letters of the 5th and 6th instant.

The pleasure I have in corresponding with you will dispose me, whenever I have any thing to communicate that may be worth your attention, or that appears to me so, to trouble you with my sentiments. But I shall not expect you to make an equal return either in quantity or frequency. You will in this entirely consult your own convenience.

I had previously flattered myself that your ideas

[1] The leader of the intrigue against Washington which has become famous as the "Conway Cabal."

[2] Endorsed "private" by Governor Clinton, and answered by him March 5th.

[3] From the Clinton papers.

and mine would correspond on certain matters, and I am glad to find I was not mistaken. I doubt not the defects of a certain synod will appear to you not the subject of speculation only, but as disorders in the State that require a remedy, and will, as far as your influence reaches, contribute to it. Shall I speak what seems to me a most melancholy truth? It is this: that with the most adequate means to insure success in our contest, the weakness of our councils will, in all probability, ruin us. Arrangements on which the existence of the army depends, and almost the possibility of another campaign, are delayed in a most astonishing manner, and I doubt whether they will be adopted at all.

A late resolve directs G. W.[1] to fix the number of men under which G. H.[2] shall not send any parties out of his lines on pain of being treated as marauders. The folly of this is truly ridiculous; but as there is perhaps nothing but folly in it, it may be excused in them. Another resolve made for punishing kidnappers or persons who aid the enemy in carrying off the peaceable inhabitants, has a retrospective view to those who have assisted, as well as a prospective one to those who shall assist, in such practices. Thus we have gotten into the spirit of making *ex post facto* laws, or rather, violating all law. Another resolve by plain implication acknowledges a thing not founded on fact, which is very injurious to us—to wit, that we have enlisted prisoners of war. This silences all our complaints against the enemy for a similar practice and furnishes them with a damn-

[1] General Washington. [2] General Howe.

ing answer to any thing we can say on the subject. This is at least an instance of folly and inconsideration, and serves to prove the general charge.

These men seem also to have embraced a system of infidelity. They have violated the convention of Saratoga, and I have reason to believe the ostensible motives for it were little better than pretences, that had no foundation. I have lately seen some letters from Burgoyne on the subject. There was, however, a strong temptation for this, and it may be excused, though I cannot say the measure is to my taste. Lately a flag with provisions and clothing for the British prisoners with G. W.'s passport was seized at Lancaster. The affair was attended with circumstances of violence and meanness that would disgrace Hottentots. Still more lately, G. W.'s engagements with G. H. for an exchange of prisoners have been most shamefully violated, Congress have resolved that no exchange shall take place till all accounts are settled and the balance due the U. S. paid. The beauty of it is, on a fair settlement, we shall without doubt be in Mr. Howe's debt; and, in the meantime, we detain his officers and soldiers as a security for the payment—perhaps forever. At any rate, it cannot take place all next summer.

It is thought to be bad policy to go into an exchange; but, admitting this to be true, it is much worse policy to commit such frequent breaches of faith and ruin our national character. Whatever refined politicians may think, it is of great consequence to preserve a national character; and, if it should once seem to be a system in any State to violate

its faith whenever it is the least inconvenient to keep it, it will unquestionably have an ill effect upon foreign negotiations, and tend to bring Government at home in contempt, and, of course, to destroy its influence. The general notions of justice and humanity are implanted in almost every human breast and ought not to be too freely shocked. In the present case the passions of the country and army are on the side of an exchange, and a studied attempt to avoid it will disgust both and serve to make the source odious. It will injure drafting and recruiting, discourage the militia, and increase the discontents of the army. The prospects of hopeless captivity cannot but be very disagreeable to men constantly exposed to the chance of it. Those whose lot it is to fall into it, will have little scruple to get out of it by joining the enemy.

It is said not to be our present interest to exchange, because we shall endeavor, by and by, to take advantage of the enemy's weakness to strike some decisive blow. If we should fail in this, which I believe we shall, when they get reinforced, we shall not think it our interest to add to the strength of an enemy, already strong enough, and so on *ad infinitum*. The truth is, considered in the mere view of barter, it can never be our interest to exchange; the constitution of our army, from the short term of enlistments and the dependence we are obliged to place in the militia, are strongly opposed to it; and if the argument of present interest be adhered to, we never can exchange. I may venture to assert there never can be a time more proper than the present, or, rather, a

month or two hence; and go about it as soon as we please, the previous negotiations necessary and other circumstances will, of course, procrastinate it for some time. And I would ask whether, in a republican State and a republican army, such a cruel policy as that of exposing those men who are foremost in defense of their country, to the miseries of hopeless captivity, can succeed?

For my own part, I have so much of the milk of humanity in me, that I abhor such *Neronian* maxims; and I look upon the old proverb that *honesty is the best policy* to be so generally true, that I can never expect any good from a system at real deviation from it; and I never can adopt the reasonings of some *American* politicians, deducible from their practice, that no regard is to be paid to national character or the rules of good faith.

I dwell upon the faults of Congress, because I think they strike at the vitals of our opposition and of our future prosperity; and with this idea, I cannot but wish that every gentleman of influence in the country should think with me.

We have nothing new in camp, save that Capt. Barry, late of a continental frigate, has destroyed, with a few gun-boats, two large ships belonging to the enemy, laden with forage from Rhode Island. He also took an armed schooner, which he has since been obliged to run on shore, after a gallant defence. 'T is said he has saved her cannon and stores; among the ordnance, four brass howitzers. Some accounts say the enemy are preparing to evacuate Philadelphia. *Sed credat Judæus Apelles, non ego.*

TO WILLIAM DUER, M.C.[1]

HEADQUARTERS, June 18, 1778.

DEAR SIR:

I take the liberty to trouble you with a few hints on a matter of some importance. Baron Steuben, who will be the bearer of this, waits on Congress to have his office arranged upon some decisive and permanent footing. It will not be amiss to be on your guard. The Baron is a gentleman for whom I have a particular esteem, and whose zeal, intelligence, and success, the consequence of both, entitle him to the greatest credit. But I am apprehensive, with all his good qualities, that a fondness for power and importance, natural to every man, may lead him to wish for more extensive prerogatives in his department than it will be for the good of the service to grant. I should be sorry to excite any prejudice against him on this account; perhaps I may be mistaken in my conjecture. The caution I give will do no harm if I am; if I am not, it may be useful. In either case, the Baron deserves to be considered as a valuable man and treated with all the deference which good policy will warrant.

On the first institution of this office, the General allowed him to exercise more ample powers than would be proper for a continuance. They were necessary in the commencement, to put things in a train with a degree of dispatch which the exigency of our affairs required; but it has been necessary to

[1] Baron Steuben was appointed Inspector-general of the Army May 5, 1778, and this letter, which is undated in the edition of 1850, refers to that office.

restrain them, even earlier than was intended. The novelty of the office excited questions about its boundaries; the extent of its operations alarmed the officers of every rank for their own rights. Their jealousies and discontents were rising fast to a height that threatened to overturn the whole plan. It became necessary to apply a remedy. The General has delineated the functions of the Inspectorship in general orders, a copy of which will be sent to Congress. The plan is good and satisfactory to the army in general.

It may be improved, but it will be unsafe to deviate essentially from it. It is of course the General's intention, that whatever regulations are adopted by him, should undergo the revision and receive the sanction of Congress ; but it is indispensable, in the present state of our army, that he should have the power, from time to time, to introduce and authorize the reformations necessary in our system. It is a work which must be done by occasional and gradual steps, and ought to be intrusted to a person on the spot who is thoroughly acquainted with all our defects and has judgment sufficient to adopt the progressive remedies they require. The plan established by Congress, on a report of the Board of War, when Conway was appointed, appears to me exceptionable in many respects. It makes the Inspector independent of the Commander-in-chief ; confers powers which would produce universal opposition in the army; and, by making the previous concurrence of the Board of War requisite to the introduction of every regulation which should be found necessary,

opens such a continual source of delay as would defeat the usefulness of the institution. Let the Commander-in-chief introduce, and the Legislature afterwards ratify or reject, as they think proper. Perhaps you will not differ much from me when I suppose, that, so far as relates to the Board of War, the former scheme was a *brat of faction*, and therefore ought to be renounced.

There is one thing which the Baron has much at heart, which, in good policy, he can by no means be indulged in; it is the power of enforcing that part of discipline which we understand by subordination or an obedience to orders. This power can only be properly lodged with the Commander-in-chief, and would inflame the whole army if put into other hands. Each captain is vested with it in his company, each colonel in his regiment, each general in his particular command, and the Commander-in-chief in the whole.

When I began this letter I did not intend to meddle with any other subject than the inspectorship, but one just comes into my head which appears to me of no small importance. The goodness or force of an army depends as much, perhaps more, on the composition of the corps which form it, as on its collective number. The composition is good or bad—not only to the quality of the men, but in proportion to the completeness or incompleteness of a corps in respect to numbers. A regiment, for instance, with a full complement of officers and fifty or sixty men, is not half so good as a company with the same number of men. A colonel will look upon such a command as unworthy his ambition, and will neglect and despise

it: a captain would pride himself in it, and take all the pains in his power to bring it to perfection. In one case we shall see a total relaxation of discipline and negligence of every thing that constitutes military excellence; in the other there will be attention, energy, and every thing that can be wished. Opinion, whether well- or ill-founded, is the governing principle of human affairs. A corps much below its establishment, comparing what it is with what it ought to be, loses all confidence in itself, and the whole army loses that confidence and emulation which are essential to success. These, and a thousand other things that will occur to you, make it evident that the most important advantages attend the having complete corps, and proportional disadvantages the reverse. Ten thousand men, distributed into twenty imperfect regiments, will not have the efficiency of the same number in half the number of regiments. The fact is, with respect to the American army, that the want of discipline and other defects we labor under, are as much owing to the skeleton state of our regiments as to any other cause. What then?

Have we any prospects of filling our regiments? My opinion is, that we have nearly arrived at our *ne plus ultra*. If so, we ought to reduce the number of corps, and give them that substance and consistency which they want, by incorporating them together, so as to bring them near their establishment. By this measure the army would be infinitely improved; and the State would be saved the expense of maintaining a number of superfluous officers.

In the present condition of our regiments, they are

incapable even of performing their common exercises without joining two or more together: an expedient reluctantly submitted to by those officers who see themselves made second in command of a battalion, instead of first, as their commission imports; which happens to every younger colonel whose regiment is united with that of an elder.

What would be the inconveniencies, while the officers who remain in command, and who might be selected from the others on account of superior merit, would applaud themselves in the preference given them, and rejoice at a change which confers such additional consequence on themselves?

Those who should be excluded by the measure would return home discontented, and make a noise, which would soon subside and be forgotten among matters of greater moment. To quiet them still more effectually, if it should be thought necessary, they might be put upon half-pay for a certain time.

If, on considering this matter, you should agree with me in sentiment, it were to be wished the scheme could be immediately adopted, while the arrangement now in hand is still unexecuted. If it is made, it will be rather inconvenient, immediately after, to unhinge and throw the whole system again afloat.

When you determined upon your last arrangement, you did not know what success the different States might have had in draughting and recruiting. It would then have been improper to reduce the number of corps, as proposed. We have now seen their success: we have no prospect of seeing the regiments filled; we should reduce them.

TO LAFAYETTE

25th June, 1778.

SIR:

We find, on our arrival here, that the intelligence received on the road is true. The enemy have all filed off from Allen Town, on the Monmouth road. Their rear is said to be a mile westward of Lawrence Taylor's tavern, six miles from Allen Town. General Maxwell is at Hyde's Town, about three miles from this place. General Dickinson is said to be on the enemy's right flank; but where, cannot be told. We can hear nothing certain of General Scott; but, from circumstances, he is probably at Allen Town. We shall, agreeably to your request, consider and appoint some proper place of rendezvous for the union of our force, which we shall communicate to Generals Maxwell and Scott, and to yourself. In the meantime, I would recommend to you to move toward this place as soon as the convenience of your men will permit. I am told that Colonel Morgan is on the enemy's right flank. We had a slight skirmish with their rear this forenoon, at Robert Montgomery's, on the Monmouth road, leading from Allen Town. We shall see General Maxwell immediately, and you will hear from us again. Send this to the General after reading it.

DOCTOR STILE'S HOUSE, CRANBURY TOWN, 9 o'clock.

We are just informed that General Scott passed by Hooper's tavern, five miles from Allen Town, this afternoon, at five o'clock.

TO WASHINGTON

ROBIN'S TAVERN, 8 miles from Allen Town,
12 o'clock, June 26, 1778.

SIR:

We have halted the troops at this place. The enemy, by our last reports, were four miles from this (that is, their rear), and had passed the road which turns off toward South Amboy, which determines their route toward Shrewsbury. Our reason for halting, is the extreme distress of the troops for want of provisions. General Wayne's detachment is almost starving, and seems both unwilling and unable to march further till they are supplied. If we do not receive an immediate supply, the whole purpose of our detachment must be frustrated.

This morning we missed doing any thing, from a deficiency of intelligence. On my arrival at Cranbury yester-evening, I proceeded, by desire of the Marquis, immediately to Hyde's Town and Allen Town, to take measures for co-operating with the different parts of the detachment, and to find what was doing to procure intelligence. I found every precaution was neglected; no horse was near the enemy, nor could be heard of till late in the morning, so that before we could send out parties and get the necessary information, they were in full march: and as they have marched pretty expeditiously, we should not be able to come up with them during the march of the day, if we did not suffer the impediment we do, on the score of provisions. We are entirely at a loss where the army is, which is no inconsiderable check to our enterprise. If the army is wholly out of supporting

distance, we risk the total loss of the detachment in making an attack.

If the army will countenance us, we may do something clever. We feel our personal honor, as well as the honor of the army, and the good of the service, interested; and are heartily desirous to attempt whatever the disposition of our men will second, and prudence authorize. It is evident the enemy wish to avoid, not to engage us.

Desertions, I imagine, have been pretty considerable to-day. I have seen eight or ten deserters and have heard of many more. We have had some little skirmishing by detached parties: one attacked their rear-guard with a degree of success, killed a few, and took seven prisoners.

An officer has just come in, who informs that he left the enemy's rear five miles off, still in march, about half an hour ago. To ascertain still more fully their route, I have ordered a fresh party on their left, toward the head of their column. They have three brigades in rear of their baggage.

TO WASHINGTON

June 28, 1778.

SIR:

The result of what I have seen and heard, concerning the enemy, is, that they have encamped with their van a little beyond Monmouth Court House, and their rear at Manalapan's river, about seven miles from this place. Their march to-day has been very judiciously conducted;—their baggage in front,

and their flying army in the rear, with a rear-guard of one thousand men about four hundred paces from the main body. To attack them in this situation, without being supported by the whole army, would be folly in the extreme. If it should be thought advisable to give the necessary support, the whole army can move to some position near the enemy's left flank, which would put them in a very awkward situation, with so respectable a body in their rear; and it would put it out of their power to turn either flank, should they be so disposed. Their left is strongly posted, and I am told their right also. By some accounts one part of their army lies on the road leading from the Monmouth road to South Amboy. It is not improbable that South Amboy may be the object.

I had written thus far when your letter to the Marquis arrived. This puts the matter on a totally different footing. The detachment will march to-morrow morning at three o'clock to English Town.

TO ELIAS BOUDINOT [1]

July 5, 1778.

DEAR SIR:

We have made another detachment of a thousand men under General Wayne, and formed all the detached troops into an advanced corps, under the

[1] The distinguished New Jersey patriot and statesman; at this time member of Congress and Commissary General of Prisoners; afterwards President of Congress, and from 1789–1795 member of the National House of Representatives.

command of the Marquis de Lafayette. The project was that this advanced corps should take the first opportunity to attack the enemy's rear on a march, to be supported or covered, as circumstances should require, by the whole army. General Lee's conduct with respect to the command of this corps was truly childish. According to the incorrect notions of our army, his seniority would have entitled him to the command of the advanced corps; but he in the first instance declined it in favor of the marquis. Some of his friends having blamed him for doing it, and Lord Stirling having shown a disposition to interpose his claim, General Lee very inconsistently reasserted his pretensions. The matter was a second time accommodated, General Lee, and Lord Stirling agreed to let the Marquis command. General Lee, a little time after, recanted again, and became very importunate. The General (Washington), who had all along observed the greatest candor in the matter, grew tired of such fickle behavior, and ordered the Marquis to proceed.

I never saw the General to so much advantage. His coolness and firmness were admirable. He instantly took measures for checking the enemy's advance, and giving time to the army, which was very near, to form and make a proper disposition. He then rode back, and had the troops formed on a very advantageous piece of ground, in which, and in other transactions of the day, General Lee and Lord Stirling rendered very essential service, and did themselves great honor. America owes a great deal to General Washington for this day's work. A general

rout, dismay, and disgrace would have attended the whole army in any other hands but his. By his own good sense and fortitude, he turned the fate of the day. Other officers have great merit in performing their parts well, but he directed the whole with the skill of a master workman. He did not hug himself at a distance and leave an Arnold to win laurels for him, but by his own presence he brought order out of confusion, animated his troops, and led them to success. After a tribute to Wayne, Stewart, Ramsey, Olney, Livingston, Barber, Cilley, Parker, Craig, and Oswald, the behavior of the officers and men was such as could not easily be surpassed. Our troops, after the first impulse from mismanagement, behaved with more spirit and moved with greater order than the British troops. You know my way of thinking of our army, and that I am not apt to flatter it. I assure you I never was pleased with them before this day. What think you now of General Lee? Whatever a court martial may decide, I shall continue to believe and say,—his conduct was monstrous and unpardonable.[1]

TO LORD STIRLING (?) [2]

July 14th (?), 1778.

SIR:

Since the giving my evidence at the Court Martial, I have been endeavoring to recollect more particu-

[1] Reprinted from Hamilton's *History of the Republic*, i., pp. 468 and 478.

[2] William Alexander, commonly called in America Lord Stirling, from his claim to that earldom, was President of the Court Martial which tried Gen. Charles Lee for his conduct at the battle of Monmouth, and

larly the import of the conversation between General Lee and myself, that happened in the field the day of the action, and which was the subject of discussion yesterday before the court. My memory will not serve me on the occasion, in so clear a manner as I could wish; but I have been able to form some more distinct ideas, than those expressed when I was interrogated by General Lee, which I communicate to you to make what use of them you think proper. On my making some remarks to General Lee which I now forget, he asked me the following questions, or others to the same effect, and I think partly in the same words—"Do I appear to you to have lost my senses, or do I not possess myself?"

My answer to these questions I do not perfectly recollect, but I remember that it was a favorable one, though I am unable to determine to what extent. It will be readily conceived that so singular and unexpected a question was not a little embarrassing, and it is possible I may have replied in terms of less reserve and caution than I should have done at a moment of greater tranquillity and cooler reflection. I perfectly remember what passed in my mind upon the occasion with respect to General Lee's conduct, and, from the most deliberate and unbiassed retrospect of it, my judgment entirely coincides with what I then thought. His answers to what was said to him were pertinent, and his behavior had not the least appearance of concern on the score of personal

it is probable therefore that this hitherto unpublished letter from the Hamilton papers in the State Department, was addressed to him. Hamilton testified at the trial on July 4th and July 13th.

security. So far he possessed himself and could not be said to have lost his senses according to his own expressions. But he certainly did not appear to me to be in that collected state of mind or to have that kind of self-possession which is an essential requisite of *the General*, and which alone can enable him in critical emergencies to take his measures with the promptitude and decision they require. A certain indecision, improvidence, and hurry of spirits to the best of my recollection were apparent. These were my thoughts at the time, and it is natural for me to believe that what I replied to General Lee could not be inconsistent with them.

This letter I mean as explanatory to my testimony of yesterday, founded upon my reflections since, and if it can be done with propriety, I shall be glad it may be admitted by the court as such.

TO WASHINGTON

BLACK POINT, July 20, 1778.

SIR:

Inclosed I transmit your Excellency a letter from Count D'Estaing.[1] He has had the river sounded, and finds he cannot enter. He will sail for Rhode Island to-morrow evening. In the meantime, he is making demonstrations to deceive the enemy, and beget an opinion that he intends to operate in this

[1] Count D'Estaing arrived in Delaware Bay on July 8th, ten days too late to intercept the British. He sailed for New York and remained some time in the lower bay, unable to get pilots to take him up. He then sailed for Newport, where he arrived July 29th. This letter was written just before D'Estaing's departure from New York.

quarter. He would sail immediately, but he awaits the arrival, or to hear, of a frigate which carried Mr. Gerard to Delaware, and which he appointed to meet him at Sandy Hook; so that he fears that his sudden and unexpected departure, before she arrives, might cause her to be lost. He will not, however, wait longer than to-morrow evening. We have agreed that five cannon, fired briskly, shall be a signal of his arrival by day, and the same number, with five sky-rockets, a signal by night. In communicating this to General Sullivan, the Count wishes not a moment may be lost; and that he may be directed to have persons stationed on the coast, and intermediate expresses, to facilitate the communication between them. Pilots will be a material article. He begs that every thing may be forwarded as much as possible; and as many troops collected as may be. He would be glad if a detachment could march from your army, or could be sent by water; for which purpose he would send covering ships, and some vessels he has taken, by way of transports; but he cannot think of losing so much time as seems necessary. If the water scheme could shorten it, it would be a happy circumstance. He recommends it to your attention; and that you would take measures, if the end can be better answered in this way, and meet him with information of the part he may have to act to execute the plan. I perceive he can, with difficulty, debark four thousand troops; but he will try to do it.

I hope your Excellency will excuse my not being myself the bearer of these particulars; the end may be answered by letter. Mr. Neville is anxious to get

on. I just have heard of dispatches arrived from you. I don't know but they may contain something new which may make the Count to wish a good conveyance to return an answer. My stay until tomorrow morning may answer that end. I shall not delay coming forward.

TO WASHINGTON

NEWARK, July 23, 1778, one o'clock.

SIR:

I wrote to your Excellency the evening of the 20th by Major Neville. I remained in the neighborhood of Black Point till the afternoon following. The Count had received his expected dispatches from Congress, and was to sail, as I mentioned before, the first fair wind. At Brunswick yesterday Mr. Caldwell joined me. He was immediately from the Point, and brought intelligence that the fleet got under way yesterday morning. The wind, unfortunately, has been much against them, which is so much the more to be regretted, as they are rather in want of water.

I need not suggest to your Excellency that an essential part of the Rhode Island plan is to take every possible measure to watch the enemy's motions and to establish expresses from place to place, to give the Count instant information of any movement among their fleet. This will enable him to be in time to intercept them should they attempt to evacuate New York while he is at Rhode Island; and will, in general, facilitate the intercourse and co-operation between him and your Excellency.

I have nothing new to communicate beside what

was sent by Major Neville and what I now send. All the ideas interchanged between the Count and myself were such as were familiar before I left headquarters. He was to go to Rhode Island, and, in connection with General Sullivan, endeavor to possess himself of the enemy's ships and troops there; if, on his arrival, he had good reason to think it could be effected without further assistance. If not, he will be glad of a reinforcement from you in the most expeditious manner possible. What manner you think will be most expeditious, you will adopt; and if his aid may be useful, he will afford it as soon as he is informed of it.

This being the case, my immediate presence at headquarters is the less necessary as to this business; and I hope your Excellency will indulge me, if I do not make all the dispatch back which a case of emergency would require, though I do not mean to delay more than a moderate attention to my frail constitution may make not improper.

TO ELIAS BOUDINOT

July 26, 1778.

Dear Sir:

Baron Steuben will do me the honor to deliver you this. He waits upon Congress in a temper which I very much regret—discontented with his situation, and almost resolved to quit the service. You know we have all the best opinion of this gentleman's military merit, and shall, of course, consider his leaving the army as a loss to it. Whether any expedient can be adopted to reconcile difficulties and retain him in

the service, at the same time that no disgust is given to others who ought not to be disgusted, I cannot certainly determine. But I should conceive it would not be impossible to find such an expedient. You have no doubt heard while you were with the army of the obstacles thrown in his way by many of the general officers, excited to it by Lee and Mifflin, as I believe, in the execution of the inspectorship; and you have, it is equally probable, heard of the arrangement the General was in a manner obliged to adopt to silence the clamors which existed among them, and place the inspectorate upon a footing more conformable to their ideas. The opposition the Baron met with in this case was one cause of dissatisfaction to him. In our march from Brunswick, as the Baron was unemployed, and there was a great deficiency of general officers, notwithstanding the ideas of the army are against giving a command in the line to a person vested with an office similar to that held by him, the General ventured to give him the temporary command of a division during the march, in consequence of which the command of a wing devolved upon him. This was a source of offence to many. When we came near the White Plains the General thanked him in general orders for his services, and requested he would resume the exercise of his former office. To this, on account of the opposition he had already met with, and from the original plan for the inspectorship being mutilated, he discovered very great disinclination, and expressed desire to preserve a command in the line, and, from some conversation we had together, I apprehend he means to resign his

present appointment, if he cannot have a command suited to his rank annexed to it. You will see by the General's letters what are his sentiments, both with respect to the duties of the inspectorship and the Baron's holding a command in the line. Far be it from me to wish to contravene his views; you may be assured they cannot be essentially departed from without very serious inconvenience. But if any thing could be done consistent with them to satisfy the Baron, it would be extremely desirable. Perhaps the principle on which the General's arrangement is formed may be preserved, and, at the same time, the objects of the inspectorship enlarged, so as to render it a more important employment. Perhaps a resolution of Congress giving the Baron a right to be employed on detachments might for the present compensate for the want of a permanent command in the line and might not be disagreeable to the officers. You can sound him on these heads. I need not caution you that this is a matter of great delicacy and importance, and that every step taken in it ought to be well considered.[1]

TO ELIAS BOUDINOT

September (?) 1778.[2]

You know the feuds and discontents which have attended the departure of the French fleet from Rhode Island. You are probably not uninformed of the imprudence of General Sullivan on the occasion,

[1] Reprinted from Hamilton's *History of the Republic*, i., p. 488.

[2] The French left New York for Newport at the end of July, and the battle of Quaker Hill was fought on August 29th.

particularly in the orders he issued charging our allies with refusing to assist us. This procedure was the summit of folly, and has made a very deep impression upon the minds of the Frenchmen in general, who naturally consider it as an unjust and ungenerous reflection on their nation. The stigmatizing an ally in public orders, and one with whom we meant to continue in amity, was certainly a piece of absurdity without parallel. The Frenchmen expect the State will reprobate the conduct of their general, and by that means make atonement for the stain he has attempted to bring upon French honor. Something of this kind seems necessary, and will in all likelihood be expected by the Court of France, but the manner of doing it suggests a question of great delicacy and difficulty, which I find myself unable to solve. The temper with which General Sullivan was actuated was too analogous to that which appeared in the generality of those concerned with him in the expedition, and to the sentiments prevailing among the people. Though men of discretion will feel the impropriety of his conduct, yet there are too many who will be ready to make a common cause with him against any attempt of the public authority to convince him of his presumption, unless the business is managed with great address and circumspection. The credit universally given him for a happy and well-conducted retreat, will strengthen the sentiments in his favor, and give an air of cruelty to any species of disgrace which might be thrown upon a man, who will be thought rather to deserve the esteem and applause of his country. To know how

to strike the proper string will require more skill than I am master of; but I would offer this general hint, that there should be a proper mixture of the sweet and bitter in the potion which may be administered. I am sure it will give you pleasure to have heard that our friend Greene did ample justice to himself on this expedition; and that Laurens [1] was as conspicuous as usual. But while we celebrate our friends and countrymen, we should not be forgetful of those meritorious strangers who are sharing the toils and dangers of America. Without derogating from the merit of the other French gentlemen who distinguished themselves, Mr. Toussard [2] may be justly allowed a pre-eminent place. In the enthusiasm of heroic valor, he attempted, single and unseconded, to possess himself of one of the enemy's field-pieces, which he saw weakly defended. He did not effect it, and the loss of his arm was the price of his bravery—his horse was shot under him at the same time; but we should not the less admire the boldness of the exploit from a failure in the success. This gentleman has now, in another and more signal instance, justified the good opinion I have long entertained of him, and merited by a fresh testimony of his zeal, as well as a new stroke of misfortune, the considera-

[1] John Laurens, Hamilton's friend and his comrade on Washington's staff.

[2] Colonel Louis Toussard was one of the officers who came out in 1777, recommended by Silas Deane. For his gallantry in this action he was brevetted a Lieutenant-Colonel and received a pension from Congress. He afterwards served his own government in the West Indies, and in 1794 returned to this country. He was an officer in our army from 1795 to 1802, and afterwards French Consul at New Orleans, 1812–1815.

tion of Congress. The splendid action he has now performed, and for which he has paid so dear should neither be concealed from the public eye, nor the public patronage. You are at liberty to commit this part of my letter to the press.[1]

TO ———

HEADQUARTERS, Nov. 8, 1778.

DEAR SIR:

I have received your favor of the 4th, and shall with pleasure communicate the intelligence we have had at headquarters. On the morning of the 3d one hundred and eight sail of vessels sailed out of the Hook,—supposed, from the best calculations, to contain seven or eight thousand men. They first steered to the eastward, but soon after changed their course and bore S. E. with the wind at N. W. The general accounts from New York speak of three distinct embarkations: one for the West Indies, another for Halifax, another for St. Augustine. One division, which seems to be best ascertained, contains ten or twelve British regiments and most of the new levies, which probably went in the above-mentioned fleet.

This much is pretty certain, that the embarkation has continued since the departure of that fleet, which is a strong circumstance in favor of a general evacuation. All their vessels the least out of repair are drawn up to the different ship-yards, and their repairs are going on with all possible vigor. Whether the merchants are packing up or not, is a point still

[1] Reprinted from Hamilton's *History of the Republic*, i., 494.

much *in dubio;* though we have several accounts that look like it, but they are not so precise and certain as could be wished. Several bales of goods have been seen on the wharves, marked for particular ships. A deserter, indeed, lately from the city, insists that he saw Coffin and Anderson packing up. This, if true, would be decisive, for this is a very considerable house particularly attached to the army. One of our spies, a trusty one too, writes, the 31st of October, that the principal part of the sick from the hospitals had embarked, but this stands almost wholly upon its own bottom. The capture of Jamaica seems to be a mere rumor. There are several others respecting St. Kitts, Montserrat, and Grenada. The two former are said to have been taken by surprise on a temporary absence of their guard-ships, but these stories were not improbably suggested by a late sudden and very considerable rise in the prices of rum and molasses. The former being as high as fourteen or fifteen shillings per gallon. Large purchases have been made of these articles as sea stores for the troops, and the speculators in the city have been bidding against the commissaries, which better accounts for the increased prices.

It is a question very undecided in my mind whether the enemy will evacuate or not. Reasoning *a priori*, the arguments seem to be strongest for it—from the exhausted state of the British resources, the naked condition of their dominions everywhere, and the possibility of a Spanish war. But, on the other hand, naval superiority must do a great deal in the business. This I think, considering all things,

appears clearly enough to be on the side of Britain. The sluggishness of Spain affords room to doubt her taking a decisive part. The preserving posts in these States will greatly distress our trade and give security to the British West India trade. They will also cover the West Indies, and restrain any operations of ours against the British dominions on the continent. These considerations, and the depreciated state of our currency, will be strong inducements to keep New York and Rhode Island, if not with a view to conquest, with a view to temporary advantages, and making better terms in a future negotiation.

From appearances, the great delay which attends the embarkation, the absolute tranquillity of the post at Rhode Island, where there is no kind of preparation for leaving it, and some other circumstances, seem to indicate an intention to remain. On the other hand, besides the general appearances I have already mentioned, their inattention to the petition of the refugees, and the not raising new works, are strong additional reasons for going away. I think it most probable, if they were determined to continue a garrison, that they would give most explicit assurance to their friends, in order to encourage their proposal and engage them to aid in maintaining it. I think, also, they would contract their work, to be better proportioned to the number of the garrison, and of course more defensible, by throwing a chain of fortifications across the narrow part of the island.

Nothing has yet been decided that we know of with respect to the sentences you mention. General

Lee's case,[1] by our last advices, was on the eve of a final decision. It seems he has made a strong party in Congress, and is very confident of having the sentence annulled. St. Clair's trial [2] was ordered to be printed for the separate consideration of the members.

The depreciation of our currency really casts a gloom on our prospects, but my sentiments on the subject are rather peculiar. I think, bad as it is, it will continue to draw out the resources of the country a good while longer, and especially if the enemy make such detachments, of which there is hardly a doubt, as will oblige them to act on the defensive. This will make our public expenditures infinitely less, and will allow the States leisure to attend to the arrangements of their finances, as well as the country tranquillity to cultivate its resources.

Any letters that may come to headquarters for you will be carefully forwarded.

TO BARON STEUBEN

HEADQUARTERS, Dec. 19, 1778.

I snatch a hasty moment, my dear Baron, to acknowledge the receipt of your obliging favor of the sixth. It came here while I was absent in an interview with some British commissioners on the subject of an exchange of prisoners, and was not delivered to

[1] General Charles Lee was tried by court-martial, for his conduct at the battle at Monmouth, as already described.

[2] Major-General Arthur St. Clair, of our army. He was tried by court-martial in September, 1778, for the evacuation of Ticonderoga, July 4, 1777, and honorably acquitted.

me till two days ago. I am sorry that your business does not seem to make so speedy a progress as we all wish, but I hope it will soon come to a speedy termination. I wish you to be in a situation to employ yourself usefully and agreeably, and to contribute to giving our military constitution that order and perfection it certainly wants. I have not time now to enter upon some matters which I shall take another opportunity to give you my sentiments concerning. I have read your letter to Lee with pleasure. It was conceived in terms which the offence merited, and if he had had any feeling, must have been felt by him. Considering the pointedness and severity of your expressions, his answer was certainly a very modest one, and proved that he had not a violent appetite for so close a *tête-a-tête* as you seem disposed to insist upon. This evasion, if known to the world, would do him very little honor. I don't know but I shall be shortly at Philadelphia, if so, I shall have the honor of personally assuring you of the perfect respect and esteem with which I am, etc.

NARRATIVE OF AN AFFAIR OF HONOR BETWEEN GENERAL LEE AND COL. LAURENS [1]

24th December, 1778.

General Lee, attended by Major Edwards, and Col. Laurens, attended by Col. Hamilton, met agreeable to appointment on Wednesday afternoon at half-past three in a wood situate near the four-mile

[1] Colonel Laurens called Gen. Charles Lee out for using disrespectful language about Washington after the battle of Monmouth.

stone on the Point-no-point road. Pistols having been the weapons previously fixed upon, and the combatants being provided with a brace each, it was asked in what manner they were to proceed. General Lee proposed to advance upon one another and each fire at what time and distance he thought proper. Col. Laurens expressed his preference of this mode, and agreed to the proposal accordingly.

They approached each other within about five or six paces and exchanged a shot almost at the same moment. As Col. Laurens was preparing for a second discharge, General Lee declared himself wounded. Col. Laurens, as if apprehending the wound to be more serious than it proved, advanced towards the General to offer his support. The same was done by Col. Hamilton and Major Edwards under a similar apprehension. General Lee then said the wound was inconsiderable—less than he had imagined at the first stroke of the ball, and proposed to fire a second time. This was warmly opposed both by Col. Hamilton and Major Edwards, who declared it to be their opinion, that the affair should terminate as it then stood. But General Lee repeated his desire that there should be a second discharge, and Col. Laurens agreed to the proposal. Col. Hamilton observed that unless the General was influenced by motives of personal enmity, he did not think the affair ought to be pursued any further; but as General Lee seemed to persist in desiring it, he was too tender of his friend's honor to persist in opposing it. The combat was then going to be renewed; but Major Edwards again declaring his opinion, that the

affair ought to end where it was, General Lee then expressed his confidence in the honor of the gentlemen concerned as seconds, and said he should be willing to comply with whatever they should coolly and deliberately determine. Col. Laurens consented to the same.

Col. Hamilton and Major Edwards withdrew, and conversing awhile on the subject, still concurred fully in the opinion, that, for the most urgent reasons, the affair should terminate as it was then circumstanced. This decision was communicated to the parties and agreed to by them, upon which they immediately returned to town; General Lee slightly wounded in the right side.

During the interview a conversation to the following purport passed between General Lee and Col. Laurens. On Col. Hamilton's intimating the idea of personal enmity, as before mentioned, General Lee declared he had none, and had only met Col. Laurens to defend his own honor; that Mr. Laurens best knew whether there was any on his part. Col. Laurens replied, that General Lee was acquainted with the motives that had brought him there, which were that he had been informed, from what he thought good authority, that General Lee had spoken of General Washington in the grossest and most opprobrious terms of personal abuse, which he, Col. Laurens, thought himself bound to resent, as well on account of the relation he bore to General Washington, as from motives of personal friendship and respect for his character. General Lee acknowledged that he had given his opinion against General

Washington's military character to his particular friends, and might perhaps do it again. He said every man had a right to give his sentiments freely of military characters, and that he did not think himself personally accountable to Col. Laurens for what he had done in that respect. But he said he never had spoken of General Washington in the terms mentioned, which he could not have done, as well because he had always esteemed General Washington as a man, as because such abuse would be incompatible with the character he would ever wish to sustain as a gentleman.

Upon the whole we think it a piece of justice to the two gentlemen to declare, that after they met their conduct was strongly marked with all the politeness, generosity, coolness, and firmness that ought to characterize a transaction of this nature.

Alex. Hamilton.
Ev. Edwards.

Philad., Decemr. 24, 1778.

TO THE HONORABLE JOHN JAY, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

Headquarters, March 14, 1779.

Dear Sir:

Colonel Laurens, who will have the honor of delivering you this letter, is on his way to South Carolina, on a project which I think, in the present situation of affairs there, is a very good one, and deserves every kind of support and encouragement. This is to raise two, three, or four battalions of negroes, with the assistance of the government of

that State, by contributions from the owners, in proportion to the number they possess. If you should think proper to enter upon the subject with him, he will give you a detail of his plan. He wishes to have it recommended by Congress to the State; and, as an inducement, that they would engage to take their battalions into Continental pay.

It appears to me that an expedient of this kind, in the present state of Southern affairs, is the most rational that can be adopted, and promises very important advantages. Indeed, I hardly see how a sufficient force can be collected in that quarter without it; and the enemy's operations there are growing infinitely serious and formidable. I have not the least doubt that the negroes will make very excellent soldiers, with proper management; and I will venture to pronounce, that they cannot be put in better hands than those of Mr. Laurens. He has all the zeal, intelligence, enterprise, and every other qualification requisite to succeed in such an undertaking. It is a maxim with some great military judges, that, with sensible officers, soldiers can hardly be too stupid; and, on this principle, it is thought that the Russians would make the best soldiers in the world, if they were under other officers than their own. The king of Prussia is among the number who maintains this doctrine, and has a very emphatic saying on the occasion, which I do not exactly recollect. I mention this because I have frequently heard it objected to the scheme of embodying negroes, that they are too stupid to make soldiers. This is so far from appearing to me a valid objection, that I think their

want of cultivation (for their natural faculties are as good as ours), joined to that habit of subordination which they acquire from a life of servitude, will enable them sooner to become soldiers than our white inhabitants. Let officers be men of sense and sentiment; and the nearer the soldiers approach to machines, perhaps the better.

I foresee that this project will have to combat much opposition from prejudice and self-interest. The contempt we have been taught to entertain for the blacks, makes us fancy many things that are founded neither in reason nor experience; and an unwillingness to part with property of so valuable a kind, will furnish a thousand arguments to show the impracticability, or pernicious tendency, of a scheme which requires such sacrifices. But it should be considered, that if we do not make use of them in this way, the enemy probably will; and that the best way to counteract the temptations they will hold out, will be to offer them ourselves. An essential part of the plan is to give them their freedom with their swords. This will secure their fidelity, animate their courage, and, I believe, will have a good influence upon those who remain, by opening a door to their emancipation. This circumstance, I confess, has no small weight in inducing me to wish the success of the project; for the dictates of humanity, and true policy, equally interest me in favor of this unfortunate class of men.

While I am on the subject of Southern affairs, you will excuse the liberty I take in saying, that I do not think measures sufficiently vigorous are pursuing for

our defence in that quarter. Except the few regular troops of South Carolina, we seem to be relying wholly on the militia of that and the two neighboring States. These will soon grow impatient of service, and leave our affairs in a miserable situation. No considerable force can be uniformly kept up by militia; to say nothing of the many obvious and well-known inconveniences that attend this kind of troops. I would beg leave to suggest, sir, that no time ought to be lost in making a draught of militia to serve a twelvemonth, from the States of North and South Carolina and Virginia. But South Carolina, being very weak in her population of whites, may be excused from the draught, on condition of furnishing the black battalions. The two others may furnish about three thousand five hundred men, and be exempted, on that account, from sending any succors to this army. The States to the northward of Virginia will be fully able to give competent supplies to the army here; and it will require all the force and exertions of the three States I have mentioned to withstand the storm which has arisen and is increasing in the South.

The troops draughted must be thrown into battalions, and officered in the best possible manner. The supernumerary officers may be made use of as far as they will go. If arms are wanted for their troops, and no better way of supplying them is to be found, we should endeavor to levy a contribution of arms upon the militia at large. Extraordinary exigencies demand extraordinary means. I fear this Southern business will become a very *grave* one.

TO MISS LIVINGSTON [1]

HEADQUARTERS, March 18, 1779.

I can hardly forgive an application to my humanity to induce me to exert my influence in an affair in which ladies are concerned, and especially when you are of the party. Had you appealed to my friendship or to my gallantry, it would have been irresistible. I should have thought myself bound to have set prudence and policy at defiance, and even to have attacked wind-mills in your ladyship's service. I am not sure but my imagination would have gone so far as to have fancied New York an enchanted castle—the three ladies so many fair damsels ravished from their friends and held in captivity by the spells of some wicked magician—General Clinton, a huge giant, placed as keeper of the gates—and myself, a valorous knight, destined to be their champion and deliverer.

But when, instead of availing yourself of so much better titles, you appealed to the cold, general principle of humanity, I confess I felt myself mortified, and determined, by way of revenge, to mortify you in turn. I resolved to show you that all the eloquence of your fine pen could not tempt our Fabius to do wrong; and, avoiding any representation of my own, I put your letter into his hands and let it speak for itself. I knew, indeed, this would expose his resolution to a severer trial than it could experience in any other way, and I was not without my fears for the

[1] Miss Livingston was the daughter of Gov. Livingston, of New Jersey, and had asked Hamilton to procure a pass through the American lines for some friends living in New York.

event, but if it should decide against you, I anticipated the triumph of letting you see your influence had failed. I congratulated myself on the success of my scheme; for, though there was a harder struggle upon the occasion between inclination and duty, than it would be for his honor to tell; yet he at last had the courage to determine that, as he could not indulge the ladies with consistency and propriety, he would not run the risk of being charged with a breach of both. This he desired me to tell you, though, to be sure, it was done in a different manner, interlarded with many assurances of his great desire to oblige you, and of his regret that he could not do it in the present case, with a deal of stuff of the same kind, which I have too good an opinion of your understanding to repeat. I shall, therefore, only tell you that whether the Governor and the General are more honest or more perverse than other people, they have a very odd knack of thinking alike; and it happens in the present case that they both equally disapprove the intercourse you mention, and have taken pains to discourage it. I shall leave you to make your own reflections upon this, with only one more observation, which is that the ladies for whom you apply would have every claim to be gratified, were it not that it would operate as a bad precedent. But, before I conclude, it will be necessary to explain one point. This refusal supposes that the ladies mean only to make a visit and return to New York. If it should be their intention to remain with us, the case will be altered. There will be no rule against their coming out, and they will be an acquisition. But

this is subject to two provisos—1st, that they are not found guilty of treason or any misdemeanor punishable by the laws of the State, in which case the General can have no power to protect them; and, 2dly, that the ladies on our side do not apprehend any inconvenience from increasing their number. Trifling apart, there is nothing could give me greater pleasure than to have been able to serve Miss Livingston and her friends on this occasion, but circumstances really did not permit it. I am persuaded she has too just an opinion of the General's politeness not to be convinced that he would be happy to do any thing which his public character would justify in an affair so interesting to the tender feelings of so many ladies. The delicacy of her own ideas will easily comprehend the delicacy of his situation;—she knows the esteem of her friend,

A. Hamilton.

The General and Mrs. Washington present their compliments.[1]

TO BARON STEUBEN

May 26, 1779.

The General, on reflection, is a little uneasy about the route you intend to take. He thinks it not quite safe, as the enemy have troops on Long Island and may easily throw a party across the Sound, so that you would be in danger of having your agreeable dreams interrupted, if you should sleep any where from New Haven to Fairfield.

[1] Reprinted from Sedgwick's *Life of Wm. Livingston*, p. 320.

It is probable one of the Count's motives in coming this way may be to see the ruins of those places; and if he could do it without risk, it would be desirable; but he would not probably be at his ease if in consequence of it he should be obliged to attend the levee of Sir Henry Clinton. This may happen if he continues his intention, unless very good precautions are taken to avoid the danger. The General recommends it to you at least to be very vigilant upon your post, and not to suffer yourself to be surprised. You will be so good as to let us have timely notice of your approach, as we shall, at least, meet you at Fishkill Landing with boats to take you down to headquarters.

TO OTHO H. WILLIAMS [1]

June 11, 1779.

DEAR WILLIAMS:

The General sends you four fresh horsemen to enable you to transmit him intelligence. The General will take the road you marched to your quarters.

Mind your eye, my dear boy, and if you have an opportunity, fight hard.

TO MAJOR LEE OR, IN HIS ABSENCE, CAPT. McLANE

July, 1779.

SIR:

There is an encampment of the enemy, or a demonstration of one, which appears on the other side

[1] Major Otho H. Williams, of Maryland, afterwards a brigadier-general, and always a warm friend of Hamilton.

of the river, considerably on this side of Tarrytown. You will be pleased in consequence to have patrols kept from this till morning seven or eight miles down along the shore and on the roads leading to this place on our right. This may be a critical night, and demands the greatest vigilance.

TO COL. DAVID HENLEY [1]

HEADQUARTERS, NEW WINDSOR, July 12, 1779.

DEAR SIR:

I take the liberty to trouble you with a letter for Mr. Dana, which I have left open for your perusal; and I request it as a favor which I hope I may claim from your friendship to deliver it to him and press for a speedy answer. I think you sufficiently know my character and way of thinking to be convinced I could never have expressed sentiments of the kind imputed to me; and you will therefore be the more ready to afford me your good offices upon this occasion. There is no other gentleman in Boston whose friendship I could so far intrude upon.[2]

[1] Colonel David Henley, a brave officer of the Revolutionary War. This letter and certain others which follow relate to a remark attributed to Hamilton by Doctor Gordon, the historian of the Revolution. The most careful search has failed to discover the letters to Mr. Dana, but the "Calumny" of Dr. Gordon is shown, by a letter to Laurens (Sept. 11, 1779), given below, page 173, to have been that he quoted Hamilton as saying that he wished the people to rise, join General Washington, and turn Congress out of doors. The letters are interesting, because they are so extremely characteristic of the writer. The Mr. Dana referred to apparently was Francis Dana, of Massachusetts, afterwards a Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, and Commissioner to France.

[2] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO COL. JOHN BROOKS [1]

West Point, Aug. 6, 1779.

Dear Sir:

I enclose you the copy of a letter which I received by the last post from Mr. Dana. You will perceive, he says, he does not recollect or imagine that he threw out the observation mentioned by you respecting the probability of my having made the declaration with which I am charged; but believes it was used by some other person in company, and that you had unintentionally blended the conversation. As I am anxious to have this affair developed in all its circumstances in a clear and unequivocal manner, I request you will do me the favor to inform me whether your memory in this particular is distinct and positive, or whether it is probable you may have committed the mistake which Mr. Dana supposes. In the last case I shall be obliged to you to endeavor to recollect the real author of the insinuation. Any other remarks which Mr. Dana's statement of the matter may appear to you to require will add to the obligation you have already conferred on, sir, etc.

P. S.—I shall thank you for your answer to-morrow that I may have time to take the necessary measures before the next post sets out.[2]

[1] Colonel John Brooks, of Massachusetts, a gallant soldier of the Revolution, Adjutant-General of the State during the War of 1812 and Governor from 1816 to 1823. The letter also relates to the affair with Dr. Gordon.

[2] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO DR. WILLIAM GORDON [1]

West Point, Aug. 10, 1779.

Sir:

You will find by the enclosed copy of a letter of the 25th of July from Mr. Dana, that he mentions you as his author for a charge of a very singular nature, that has been brought against me, relative to a declaration which I am said to have made in the public coffee-house at Philadelphia. Conscious that this charge is totally destitute of foundation, I owe it to myself to investigate its source, and evince its falsehood; and as I cannot but believe that you have too great a regard to the interests of truth and justice to withhold your aid in detecting the inventor of a calumny, I persuade myself you will cheerfully disclose the authority on which your information to Mr. Dana was founded. This I now call for, and you will no doubt consider it a duty as well to yourself as to me, to give an immediate, direct, and explicit answer; sensible that the least hesitation or reserve may give room for conjectures which it can be neither your wish nor mine to excite. Col. Henley will do me the favor to receive and forward your letter.[2]

TO JAMES DUANE [3]

August 28, 1779.

Dear Sir:

I with pleasure snatch a moment, agreeable to your request, to inform you of the events which have

[1] Dr. William Gordon, an English clergyman, who was in this country during the Revolution and wrote a history of the war.

[2] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

[3] The eminent patriot and lawyer of New York and a leader in Congress.

taken place since you left us. A York paper of the 24th announces the arrival of the *Russell* of 74, which parted three days before from Arbuthnot's fleet, which was of course momently expected. Subsequent intelligence gives us the arrival of the whole fleet. This comes through different channels, and is believed; but we have no particulars. *Wayne is still safe.*

Northern news says that Sir George Collier, having appeared in Penobscot River, put our grand fleet to the rout. They were run ashore, abandoned, and burnt; the troops and seamen safe. Colonel Jackson's regiment, which had been sent as a reinforcement, landed at Portsmouth. This account comes in a letter from General Gates to Colonel Hay. To counterbalance the bad in a degree, he tells me three of our Continental frigates were arrived at Boston with six sail out of ten of the Jamaica fleet, which had fallen into their hands, containing five thousand hogsheads of rum and sugar.

TO BARON STEUBEN

September, 1779.

Dear Baron:

I am at this moment honored with your letter of the 30th ultimo, and have communicated that part of it which concerns M. De la Luzerne [1] to the General; agreeably to which we shall take our measures on the reception of this private public gentleman. We had prepared a party of cavalry to receive him at Fishkill, on the supposition that he would set out

[1] French Minister to the United States.

with an escort from Boston; but we have now sent orders to the party immediately to take the route you mention to Hartford, and there place themselves under your orders.

The General requests you will make his respectful compliments to your Chevalier, and gives you *carte blanche* to say every handsome thing you think proper in his name of the pleasure which this visit will give him. I have no doubt that your portrait, which appears to be executed *en maitre*, will be found a just representation of the original; and if he is as happy as his predecessor in gaining the esteem and confidence of the *men* of this country, with so many talents to conciliate the leaders, his ministry will not be unsuccessful. I augur well for him. Gen. Washington proposes to meet him as a private gentleman at Fishkill.

TO JAMES DUANE

September 7, 1779.

My Dear Sir:

I this day received your letter of the 4th, with one enclosed for Col. Washington, which was immediately forwarded. You do not mention the receipt of a line from me, which I wrote several days since, giving you an account of Arbuthnot's arrival.

The current of our intelligence makes the reinforcement with him amount to about three thousand, mostly recruits, and in bad health; it is said some preparations are making for an expedition, and there are various conjectures about the object:

some point to the Southward; perhaps the true destination is the West Indies. But, I confess, I should not be surprised if the enemy should make a further and vigorous attempt to gain possession of two or three of the Southern States. If their affairs are so desperate with respect to alliance as we are told, the object of the war on their side, from conquest, must necessarily change to pacification. The acquisition of two or three of the Southern States would be a handsome counterpoise to their losses in the Islands, and would enable them to negotiate with the more credit and success the ensuing winter.

I am happy to have it in my power to gratify your curiosity about the Western expedition with the enclosed agreeable account. It is the substance of a letter from General Sullivan of the 30th, extracted at Col. Hay's request, for Mr. Lowdon's paper. The facts are all true, though you will perceive I have given it a few of the usual embellishments of a newspaper paragraph. I have not specified the number of Gen. Sullivan's wounded; they amount to thirty-nine, among which are Major Titcomb and two other officers. This is a pleasing and, I hope, decisive event.

TO COLONEL JOHN BROOKS

HEADQUARTERS, Sept. 10, 1779.

DEAR SIR:

I send you, merely by way of information, the copy of a letter of the 25th of August which I yesterday received from Mr. Dana. I have only to request

that you will be good enough to inform me of the names of all the gentlemen that composed the company before which I had the honor of being exhibited on the occasion in question.[1]

TO JOHN LAURENS [2]

West Point, Sept. 11, 1779.

From the current of intelligence, an embarkation is on foot at New York. A little time will develop its destination. I hope it may disappoint my conjectures. The general opinion points to the West Indies; and, upon the whole, I believe myself the plan of Southern operations is too bold and enlarged for the feeble, shivering, contracted councils of Britain. The naval force that arrived under Arbuthnot, by the best intelligence, consists of two ships-of-the-line, two fifty-gun, and two smaller frigates. Some seamen—deserters—report that they made at sea two detachments of troops: one for Quebec, the other to Halifax—each under convoy of a vessel of the line. If Arbuthnot goes to the West Indies, Byron will still be inferior to D'Estaing, to say nothing of the Spanish fleet in that quarter. The troops and seamen arrived in a very sickly condition.

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

[2] Col. John Laurens, of South Carolina, whose name has already occurred frequently in this correspondence, was the son of Henry Laurens. He was a member of Washington's staff, and Hamilton's most intimate friend. He was one of the most dashing and brilliant of the youthful officers of the Revolution, and fell in a skirmish Aug. 27, 1782, when the war was nearly over. In 1780 he went to France as a commissioner on the loan, and was in all ways one of the most promising men of the period.

We have just received an account that looks like the approach of D'Estaing to our continent. A vessel arrived at Boston mentions having parted with him in lat. 25°, long. 70°; steering N. W., with six thousand troops on board taken in at the Cape, bound for Georgia, and afterwards northward. If this should be true, you will probably hear of him before this reaches you; but he may, perhaps, push directly northward, to lay the axe to the root. This will be a master-stroke, and fix D'Estaing's character as a first-rate officer. The reduction of the enemy's fleets and armies in America will make all their islands fall of course, deprive them of supplies from this continent, and enable us to second operations of the French with ample succors of provisions. If he touches at Georgia for your relief, and continues his progress northward, you, I know, will endeavor to keep pace with him and make us happy again. The lads all join me in embracing you most affectionately. Pray let me hear from you frequently, and deal a little in military details, as you expect the same from me. The Philadelphia papers will tell you of a handsome stroke by Lee [1] on Powle's Hook. Some folks in the Virginia line, jealous of his glory, had the folly to get him arrested. He has been tried and acquitted with the highest honor. Lee unfolds himself more and more to be an officer of great capacity, and if he had not a little spice of the Julius Cæsar or Cromwell in him, he would be a very clever fellow. Adieu.

Apropos, speaking of a Cæsar and a Cromwell,

[1] Henry Lee, of Virginia, "Light-Horse Harry."

don't you think the Cabal have reported that I declared in a public house in Philadelphia that it was high time for the people to rise, join General Washington, and turn Congress out of doors? I am running the rogues pretty hard. Dana was the first mentioned to me. He has given up Dr. Gordon, of Jamaica Plains. You well remember the old Jesuit. He made us a visit at Fredericksburg, and is writing the history of America. The proverb is verified,—"There never was any mischief, but had a priest or a woman at the bottom." I doubt not subornation and every species of villainy will be made use of to cover the villainy of the attack. I have written to Gordon, and what do you think is his answer?—he will give up his author if I will pledge my honor "neither to give nor accept a challenge, to cause it to be given or accepted, nor to engage in any encounter that may produce a duel." Pleasant terms enough. I am first to be calumniated, and then, if my calumniator takes it into his head, I am to bear a cudgelling from him with Christian patience and forbearance; for the terms required, if pursued to their consequences, come to this. I have ridiculed the proposal, and insisted on the author, on the principle of unconditional submission. What the Doctor's impudence will answer, I know not. But you who know my sentiments will know how to join me in despising these miserable detractors. On revising my work, I find several strokes of the true schoolboy sublime. Pray let them pass, and admire them if you can.[1]

[1] Reprinted from Moore's *Memoir of Laurens*, p. 154.

TO JAMES DUANE

West Point, Sept. 14, 1779.

My Dear Sir:

I do not recollect whether I said any thing in my last about the strength of the reinforcement with Arbuthnot. All the accounts agree that it does not exceed 3,000, mostly recruits, and in very bad health; it is said more than a thousand died on the passage, and a greater part of the remainder are journeying fast to the other world. Disease prevails also in the other parts of the army and among the inhabitants, more than has been known at any time since the enemy has been in possession of the city. They have been of late making extensive preparations for embarking troops, and we have just received advice that two German and one British regiment sailed from New York on the 11th, under convoy of a sixty-four. The rumors about the destination are various. The West Indies, Georgia, Canada, are all talked of, but the first with most confidence, and is no doubt most probable. Our intelligence announces a continuance of the embarkation.

A vessel, lately arrived at Boston from the Cape, reports that she sailed from that place in company with Count D'Estaing, with twenty-five sail of the line and some transports, containing 6,000 troops taken in at the Cape, and bound first to Georgia and afterwards farther northward. She parted with the fleet in latitude 25°, longitude 74°. Two other vessels, arrived at some place in Connecticut, pretend that they parted with a French fleet of men-of-war and transports, in the latitude of Bermuda, steering

for this coast. These concurrent accounts are not entirely unworthy of attention, though I am not disposed to give them entire credit.

The reduction of the enemy's fleets and armies in this country would be the surest method to effect the complete conquest of the Islands, and it would be one of the most fatal strokes Great Britain could receive. The stamina of their military establishment are in this country. The ruin of this, and the capture of their seamen and ships, would be an irrecoverable loss. The West Indies would scarcely have any further prospect of succor, and would be obliged to submit to the power of France almost without resistance, which might then operate at leisure, aided by ample supplies from this continent, which I believe are the principal thing wanting.

These reasons may have induced the Count to make us a visit during the season of inactivity in the West Indies; or, if he does not come himself, if by forming a junction with the Spanish fleet he can make a detachment this way, and still maintain a superiority for operation in that quarter, this perhaps will make the event more probable than on the former supposition. I have now given you all the intelligence we have, and have mixed certainties, rumors, and conjectures. You will extract and believe as much as you think proper.

The General and family charge me to present their most affectionate respects. We are to receive the new minister to-morrow morning.

TO JAMES DUANE

October 1, 1779.

I am much obliged to you, my dear sir, for your two letters of the 16th and 23d. In haste I snatch up my pen by an express going off to the Governor, to give you the news as it runs. The most important and best authenticated is, that Count D'Estaing has arrived on the coast of Georgia. The tale runs thus: We are in possession of a Charleston paper of the 6th of September, which mentions that the Viscount de Fontanges [1] had arrived at that place, sent by the Count to announce his approach. Mr. Mitchel, who transmits the paper, adds that by the express which brought it Mr. Gerard [2] had received dispatches from the Count informing him of his intention to attack the enemy in Georgia on the 9th; that in consequence of this intelligence Mr. Gerard had postponed his voyage a few days to be the bearer of the event. This, I hope, puts a period to the danger of the Southern States, for which I could not help having strong apprehensions, notwithstanding the presumption drawn from the enemies' past folly against their pursuing any plan favorable to their interest. I acknowledge the force of the argument, but I was afraid they might for once blunder upon the right way. The departure of Cornwallis on the 25th, with the grenadiers, light infantry, and one British regiment, had increased my horrors on this subject. The nature of this corps pointed to a temporary service for some important *coup de main*. Charleston

[1] Adjutant-General of the French army.

[2] The French Minister.

presented itself as the only object. They would hardly separate the flower of their troops for any remote and permanent station. They are continuing their embarkation. The accounts we have of the particular corps carry them to between five and six thousand. I send you a Boston paper of the 23d containing some interesting European advices.

P. S.—The General is happy in the hopes you give him of a speedy visit from General Schuyler and yourself, and orders me to present his respects to both. The family join in every sentiment of perfect esteem.

DU PORTAIL AND HAMILTON TO WASHINGTON [1]

GREAT EGG HARBOR LANDING, Oct. 26, 1779.

SIR:

We are honored with two letters from your Excellency of the 10th and 21st, to the contents of which we beg leave to assure you of our strictest attention.

That of the 18th has not yet come to hand. It is not improbable it has gone round by Lewistown, which has occasioned the delay.

Colonel Hamilton wrote to your Excellency from Philadelphia, acquainting you with our arrival there and our intention to proceed to Lewistown, Cape

[1] Hamilton and General Du Portail were sent by Washington to meet the Count D'Estaing on his way up the coast with the French fleet and arrange for his coöperation with our forces. Lebégue Du Portail, general in the French army, came to the United States with Lafayette, and was a valued officer. After the revolution began in France he was made minister of War by Lafayette's influence, and fell with the latter. He remained long in hiding and finally escaped to America, and died at sea on his way back to France after the 18th Brumaire.

Henlopen, and from Great Egg Harbor, communicating our progress since, and our determination to establish ourselves at Batsto Furnace. We have since fixed on this place, about forty-four miles from the extremity of Cape May (eighteen miles short of the Furnace, which we found to be more remote than had been represented), and, as far as we have been able to learn, from one hundred to one hundred and ten miles from Sandy Hook, and about fifty from Philadelphia. Your Excellency will easily perceive the reason of our choosing this station. It did not appear to us, from our inquiries in Philadelphia, to be a point well ascertained that the fleet would stop at the Delaware, and the time which had elapsed made it more possible, if the Count should be determined to prosecute any further operations on the Continent, that he would not lose time by a procedure of this sort, but might content himself with sending some transports, under escort of a few frigates, to receive the provisions for the fleet, and proceed himself directly on to the Hook. On this supposition our position at Lewistown was entirely ineligible. The distance at which we were from the city as well as from the Hook, the delays that would consequently attend our intelligence from every quarter, the difficulty and impossibility, sometimes, of traversing the bay, made our first situation inconvenient in every respect in the event of the fleet's proceeding immediately to the Hook. These considerations induced us to cross the Delaware and take the position at which we now are, where, or in the vicinity, we propose to remain till the arrival of

the Count, till intelligence from him decides the inutility of a longer stay, or till we receive your Excellency's orders of recall.

We have now a better relation to the different points in which we are interested, and have taken the necessary precautions to gain the earliest notice of whatever happens. We have stationed expresses at the pitch of the Cape, and have established a regular communication with Major Lee, and with the city. If the fleet should appear off the Delaware, we can be there in twelve hours after its first appearance; and if at the Hook, in less than four days; provided Major Lee is punctual in conveying the intelligence, and the expresses from either side, in bringing it.

By recent information from Philadelphia (though not quite so distinct and accurate as we could wish), we find, that so late as the fourth of this month, the Count, as yet, was to open his batteries against the enemy at Savannah. The time that will probably intervene between this and the final reduction, the re-embarkation of the Count's troops, the dispositions for sailing, and his arrival on this coast, may, we fear, exhaust the season too much to permit of the co-operation to which our mission relates.

We do not, however, despair; for if the Count has been fully successful to the southward, and should shortly arrive (which may be the case), the enterprise may possibly go on.[1]

[1] The attack upon Savannah was made on Oct. 9th. The assault was a gallant one, but the combined French and American forces were repulsed by the British with heavy losses.

In a letter from Major Lee, of the 22d, he informs us, that a vessel from Georgia arrived on the 16th; since which the two sixty-fours, and the *Renown*, which were at the Hook, had fallen down towards New York; and the troops at the Hook had embarked and gone to the city. At first sight, this account alarmed us, and made us apprehensive that the enemy had received some favorable advices from the southward which put them out of danger, and superseded the necessity of continuing their preparations for defence. But, on further reflection, we think it more probable, that this is only a change of disposition; and that finding, on closer examination, they would be unable to defend the Hook, they had determined to relinquish the attempt.

This seems the more likely, as Major Lee mentions, that a part of the hulks, sunk in the channel, had gotten afloat and drifted ashore.

To this experience of the difficulty of obstructing the channel, may, perhaps, be attributed the change we suppose. And we are confirmed in this conjecture, by the evacuation of the two posts at King's Ferry, which appears by your Excellency's letter to have taken place on the 21st, five days after the supposed arrival of the vessel from Georgia; a proof that they had not received information of any decisive good fortune on their side, or ill fortune on ours; and that they persisted in their defensive plan. We are persuaded, too, that their exultation would have given wings to any good news they might have received, and that it would have reached us before this. Were the season less advanced, we

should regret the change of disposition; because we believe the attempt to defend the entrance of the Hook would have been fruitless; and it might have thrown a part of their ships and of their troops into our hands, in the first instance, which could not fail to facilitate the successive operations.

But, at this late period, it may rather be an advantage. To force the passage might have required land operations against the Hook, which would lose time and expose the fleet to the hazard of winds, which would have rendered its situation critical. Now, the fleet may probably enter the bay, on its first approach, and be in security; and the whole operation will be brought to a point, and may demand less time for its accomplishment.

As a large number of fascines, ready for use, appear to us essential to any operations that may be undertaken, we presume your Excellency has been preparing, and will continue to prepare, as many as possible. We beg leave to suggest the utility of having, at the same time, a sufficient number of gabions and sand bags. Of the former, Colonel Gouvion,[1] if your Excellency thinks proper, may be charged with the constructing: the latter may be made under the care of the Quarter-Master at Philadelphia. Several thousands may be necessary. The usual dimensions are fifteen or eighteen inches long, and twelve wide. If, notwithstanding the advices from Major Lee, any thing by land is to be attempted

[1] Jean Baptiste Gouvion, captain in the French army and major-general of the National Guard in 1789 He was killed before Maubeuge in 1792.

against the Hook, these will be peculiarly useful on such a flat, sandy spot; and, indeed, it would be impracticable to construct batteries, in any reasonable time, without them.

TO JOHN LAURENS

December, 1779.

Cold in my professions, warm in my friendships, I wish, my dear Laurens, it may be in my power, by actions rather than words, to convince you that I love you. I shall only tell you that, till you bade us adieu, I hardly knew the value you had taught my heart to set upon you. Indeed, my friend, it was not well done. You know the opinion I entertain of mankind, and how much it is my desire to preserve myself free from particular attachments, and to keep my happiness independent of the caprices of others. You should not have taken advantage of my sensibility to steal into my affections without my consent.

But as you have done it and as we are generally indulgent to those we love, I shall not scruple to pardon the fraud you have committed, on one condition: that for my sake, if not for your own, you will always continue to merit the partiality, which you have so artfully instilled into me.

I have received your two letters: one from Philadelphia, the other from Chester. I am pleased with your success, so far—and I hope the favorable omens that precede your application to the Assembly may have as favorable an issue—provided the situation of affairs should require it, which I fear will be the case. But both for your country's sake and for my

own, I wish the enemy may be gone from Georgia before you arrive, and that you may be obliged to return and share the fortunes of your old friends. In respect to the commission which you received from Congress, all the world must think your conduct perfectly right. Indeed, your ideas on this occasion seem not to have their wonted accuracy; and you have had scruples, in a great measure, without foundation. By your appointment as aide-de-camp to the commander-in-chief, you had as much the rank of lieutenant-colonel as any officer in the line. Your receiving a commission as lieutenant-colonel, from the date of that appointment, does not in the least injure or interfere with one of them; unless by virtue of it you are introduced into a particular regiment in violation of the right of succession, which is not the case at present, neither is it a necessary consequence. As you were going to command a battalion, it was proper that you should have a commission; and if this commission had been dated posterior to your appointment as aide-de-camp, I should have considered it derogatory to your former rank, to mine, and to that of the whole corps. The only thing I see wrong in the affair is this—Congress by their conduct, both on the former and present occasion, appear to have intended to confer a privilege, an honor, a mark of distinction, a something upon you, which they withheld from other gentlemen in the family. This carries with it an air of preference, which, though we can all truly say, we love your character and admire your military merit, cannot fail to give some of us uneasy sensations. But

in this, my dear, I wish you to understand me well. The blame, if there is any, falls wholly upon Congress. I repeat it, your conduct has been perfectly right, and even laudable. You rejected the offer when you ought to have rejected it; and you accepted it when you ought to have accepted it, and, let me add, with a degree of over-scrupulous delicacy. It was necessary to your project. Your project was the public good; and I should have done the same. In hesitating, you have refined on the refinements of generosity.

There is a total stagnation of news here, political and military. Gates has refused the Indian command. Sullivan is come to take it. The former has lately given a fresh proof of his impudence, his folly, and his rascality. *'T is no great matter;* but a peculiarity in the case prevents my saying *what.*

[1] I anticipate by sympathy the pleasure you must feel from the sweet converse of your dearer self in the enclosed letters. I hope they may be recent. They were brought out of New York by General Thompson, delivered to him there by a Mrs. Moore, not long from England, *soi disante parente de madame votre épouse.* She speaks of a daughter of yours,—well, when she left England, and now, my dear, as we are upon the subject of wife, I empower and command you to get me one in Carolina. Such a wife as I want will, I know, be difficult to be found, but if you succeed, it will be the stronger proof of your

[1] This passage beginning "I anticipate" and extending as far as the postscript, is now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

zeal and dexterity. Take her description—she must be young, handsome (I lay most stress upon a good shape), sensible (a little learning will do), well bred (but she must have an aversion to the word *ton*), chaste, and tender (I am an enthusiast in my notions of fidelity and fondness), of some good nature, a great deal of generosity (she must neither love money nor scolding, for I dislike equally a termagant and an economist). In politics I am indifferent what side she may be of. I think I have arguments that will easily convert her to mine. As to religion a moderate stock will satisfy me. She must believe in God and hate a saint.

But as to fortune, the larger stock of that the better. You know my temper and circumstances and will therefore pay special attention in the treaty. Though I run no risk of going to Purgatory for my avarice, yet as money is an essential ingredient to happiness in this world, as I have not much of my own, and as I am very little calculated to get more either by my address or industry, it must needs be that my wife, if I get one, bring at least a sufficiency to administer to her own extravagancies. N. B.—You will be pleased to recollect in your negotiations that I have no invincible antipathy to the *maidenly beauties*, and that I am willing to take the *trouble* of them upon myself.

If you should not readily meet with a lady that you think answers my description, you can only advertise in the public papers, and doubtless you will hear of many competitors for most of the qualifications required, who will be glad to become candidates

for such a prize as I am. To excite their emulations it will be necessary for you to give an account of the lover—his *size*, make, qualities of mind and *body*, achievements, expectations, fortune, etc. In drawing my picture you will no doubt be civil to your friend, mind you do justice to the length of my nose, and don't forget that I——

After reviewing what I have written, I am ready to ask myself what could have put it into my head to hazard this *jeu de folie*. Do I want a wife? No. I have plagues enough without desiring to add to the number that greatest of all; and if I were silly enough to do it I should take care how I employed a proxy. Did I mean to show my wit? If I did, I am sure I have missed my aim. Did I only intend to frisk? In this I have succeeded, but I have done more. I have gratified my feelings, by lengthening out the only kind of intercourse now in my power, with my friend.

P. S.—Fleury shall be taken care of. All the family send their love. In this join the General and Mrs. Washington; and what is best, it is not in the style of ceremony but sincerity.

TO DOCTOR WILLIAM GORDON

December 10, 1779.

Sir:

As your letter of the 23d of September offered nothing conclusive, I delayed acknowledging it till I should receive the result of your pretended application to your informer. This is contained in your last of the 15th of November, which arrived

while I was absent from headquarters. The unravelment of the plot in the ridiculous farce you have been acting, proves, as I at first suspected, that you are yourself the author of the calumny. Such I consider you, and such I shall represent you. The representation, I am sure, will find credit with all who know me, and the notorious bias of your disposition to duplicity and slander will give it sanction with all who are acquainted with you. I shall use the less ceremony, as I am well informed you have established a character which, in the opinion of every man of sense, has forfeited all title to the delicacy of treatment usually attached to your function. I only lament that respect to myself obliges me to confine the expression of my contempt to words.

The feint you make of involving Congress in a business little worthy of their attention, I regard as a mere trick to elude my demands for a discovery which you are unable to make. And, as I have no hope of bringing the affair to a more satisfactory issue, I now put an end to the correspondence on my part, and shall only add a repetition of what I before said, that I have no objection to any part of my conduct being canvassed before any tribunal whatever.[1]

TO WASHINGTON

MORRISTOWN May 2, 1780.

DEAR SIR:

I am extremely sorry your Excellency has been troubled with the affair to which the papers trans-

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

mitted in your letter of this morning relate. Admitting the possibility of Doctor Gordon's not being the author of what I must always call a calumny, and had he not been an irreconcilable enemy to plain dealing, the matter might have been brought to a very easy issue without the necessity of an appeal to you. My determination, however, on the contents of his letter will be a very summary one. I shall not follow him in his labored digressions, because the scope of some of them is to me unintelligible, and the rest do not merit an answer.

So far from being disposed to comply with the Doctor's conditions to avoid an inquiry, I consider the proposal he makes as a finishing stroke to that display of absurdity, littleness, and effrontery which characterizes the whole proceeding on his part, and I defy the utmost extent of his malignity and intrigue. I shall ever continue to hold him in the highest contempt,—to believe him to be the conniver of the charge against me till he gives up some other person as the author, and to represent him as such to all those with whom I have occasion to converse on the subject. I shall always speak of him in those terms which a sense of injury and a conviction of his worthlessness dictate.

I hope your Excellency will excuse the asperity of my expressions, which my respect for you would induce me to suppress, did I not owe it to my sensibility, wounded by the most barbarous attack upon my reputation and principles, to speak without reserve. I flatter myself you, sir, are too well acquainted with my way of thinking to entertain the

least doubt of my innocence, and I beg leave to assure you that nothing will give me greater pleasure than to have the matter properly investigated.

I am only apprehensive that the Doctor will so manage it as that it will be found *inexpedient* to bring it to a public discussion, and that the knowledge of circumstances will be confined to a few, to be handed about as may best suit his purposes, to the prejudice of my character. Your Excellency, too, I trust, will see the propriety of that delicacy by which I am withheld from making any formal appeal to public authority in my own justification. 'T is the business of my accuser to bring me to justice, and, by anticipating him, I should not fail to incur the imputation of self-importance. I return your Excellency the papers from Doctor Gordon.[1]

TO BARON STEUBEN

May 10, 1780.

Dear Baron:

General Knox, in conversation, has observed to the General, that instead of sending to Philadelphia for the fifteen hundred arms mentioned in your letter of the sixth, and sending those here to that place to be fitted, it would be a great saving of expense, in the article of transportation, to have the bayonets and accoutrements brought on without the arms, and fitted to those now here; which can be easily done at the Park. The question is, if the arms here

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers. It does not appear that Dr. Gordon ever brought the matter to the notice of the authorities of the State.

have no other defect than want of bayonets. The General will be glad to know what you think of General Knox's proposal. It seems to him eligible, unless there are reasons he is not acquainted with.

If there are any other articles you wish to have sent for (the General thinks you mentioned something of the kind to him), he will be glad to know what they are.

We have heard from the Marquis. He will be here at dinner. Will you dine with us also? The General requests it.

TO JAMES DUANE

May 14, 1780.

My Dear Sir:

This will be handed you by the Marquis (de Lafayette), who brings us very important intelligence. The General communicates the substance of it in a private letter to you, and proposes a measure which all deem essential.[1] For God's sake, my dear sir, engage Congress to adopt it, and come to a speedy decision. We have not a moment to lose. Were we to improve every instant of the interval, we should have too little time for what we have to do. The expected succor may arrive in the beginning of June; in all probability it will not be later than the middle. In the last case we have not a month

[1] *Writings of Washington*, vii., 32. Lafayette brought news of the coming of the French fleet with the army of Rochambeau. The measure urged by Washington was the appointment of a committee by Congress with full powers to raise men and supplies and to arrange for coöperation with the French. A committee was raised as Washington suggested, and consisted of Philip Schuyler, John Mathews, and Nathaniel Peabody.

to make our preparations in, and in this short period we must collect men, form magazines, and do a thousand things of as much difficulty as importance. The propriety of the measure proposed is so obvious that an hour ought to decide it, and if any new members are to come, they ought to set out instantly with all expedition for headquarters.

Allow me, my dear sir, to give you a hint. The General will often be glad to consult the committee on particular points, but it will be inexpedient that he should be obliged to do it oftener than he thinks proper, or any peculiar case may require. Their powers should be formed accordingly. It is the essence of many military operations, that they should be trusted to as few as possible.

The Marquis has a title to all the love of all America; but you know he has a thousand little whims to satisfy; one of these he *will have* me to write to some friend in Congress about. He is desirous of having the captain of the frigate in which he came complimented; and gives several pretty instances of his punctuality and disinterestedness. He wishes Congress to pass some resolutions of thanks, and to recommend him to their minister in France, to be recommended to the French court. The first of these is practicable. The last I think might have an officious appearance. The *essential* services the Marquis has rendered America in France give him a claim for all that can be done with propriety; but Congress must not commit themselves.

Again, my dear sir, I must entreat you to use the spur on the present occasion. The fate of America

is perhaps suspended on the issue; if we are found unprepared, it must disgrace us in the eyes of all Europe, besides defeating the good intentions of our allies, and losing the happiest opportunity we ever have had to save ourselves.

TO GENERAL GREENE

May 16, 1780.

My Dear General:

When you ask my opinion as a friend, I must always act the part of a true friend, however frequently the advice I give may happen to clash with your feelings, justly irritated by injuries which you have not merited. Considering the Board of Treasury as so many individuals, the complexion of their letter to you would abundantly justify the asperity of your reply; but considering them as a public body, one of the first in the State, policy pronounces it to be too great. We are entered deeply in a contest on which our all depends. We must endeavor to rub through it, sometimes even at the expense of our feelings. The treasury will always be essential to your department. The board conducting it will necessarily have no small influence. You may continue at the head of the department. I should think it imprudent to push differences to extremity, or to convert the airs of official consequence and the temporary work of popular prejudice into rooted personal resentments. This appears to me to be the tendency of the present letter. The board, from the necessity of our affairs, may sue for peace, but they

will hate you for the humiliation you bring upon them; and they may have it in their power to embarrass your operations. I would have you show a sensibility of injury, but I would wish you to do it in milder terms.[1]

TO BARON STEUBEN

June 7, 1780.

DEAR BARON:

I am commanded by the General to inform you that the enemy are out in considerable force, and, by the last advice, were advancing this way. We are going to meet them. The General is just set out for Chatham, and will be happy to meet you there.

TO WASHINGTON

June 8, 1780.

SIR:

I have seen the enemy. Those in view I calculate at about three thousand; there may be, and probably enough are, others out of sight. They have sent all their horse to the other side, except about fifty or sixty. Their baggage, it is agreed on all hands, has also been sent across, and their wounded. It is not ascertained that any of their infantry have passed to the other side. There are four or five

[1] This letter is reprinted from Geo. W. Greene's *Life of General Greene*, ii., p. 287; it is also given in the *History of the Republic*, ii., 4. The Treasury Board had written to Greene, who was at that time quartermaster-general, in terms implying a doubt of his integrity. He was naturally much incensed, and wrote a reply, which he submitted to Hamilton, who wrote this letter in response. Greene professed himself unable to adopt a milder tone, but consulted Hamilton as to another draft. The date is that given by Mr. Greene.

hundred on the opposite point, but it is uncertain whether they are those who went from this side, or those who were on Staten Island; I rather suppose the former.

Different conjectures may be made. The present movement may be calculated to draw us down and betray us into an action. They may have desisted from their intention of passing till night, for fear of our falling upon their rear. I believe this is the case; for, as they have but few boats, it would certainly be a delicate manœuvre to cross in our face. We are taking measures to watch their motions to-night as closely as possible. An incessant but *very light* skirmishing. Very few boats, not more than enough to carry three or four hundred men at a time; it is likely more will come down this evening.

TO THE CHEVALIER DE TERNAY [1]

Au Cap Henry, le 13 Juin, 1780.

Monsieur Le Chevalier:

Je suis envoyé par le Général Washington au Cap Henry pour y attendre votre escadre, et vous remettre ainsi qu' à Monsieur le Comte de Rochambeau, les dépêches de Monsieur le Marquis de Lafayette. Ces dépêches, Monsieur le Chevalier, contiennent le plan d'opérations que le Général Washington a l'honneur de vous proposer, la situation des ennemies, et la nôtre relativement aux forces respectives des deux

[1] Charles Louis d'Arsac de Ternay, admiral and commander of the fleet that brought Rochambeau and his army to America. He reached Newport with his fleet July 10, 1780, and died there on December 15th of the same year, in the fifty-ninth year of his age.

parties, aux points occupés, aux moyens de subsistence et cetéra; tous les changemens qui pouvaient survenir sur ces objets doivent m'être communiqués, afin qu' à votre arrivée vous puissiez avoir sous les yeux le plus de données possibles. Les mêmes détails vous attendent à Rhode Island, et si vous ne devez les reçevoir qu' après être arrivé, il est presque indifférent, Monsieur le Chevalier, que votre escadre atterisse à Rhode Island ou au Cap Henry; mais il y a des circonstances qui, si elles vous étaient connues, tendraient peut être à vous déterminer plustôt pour l'un de ces points que pour l'autre, ou même pour un troisième point que vos instructions n'ont pu prévoir. C'est pour vous rendre compte de ces circonstances que je saisis l'occasion du fier Rodrique; heureux si, dans une conjoncture où les moments sont d'une si grande importance, cette lettre peut anticiper de quelques jours vos dispositions.

1°. Par le plan proposé à vous, Monsieur le Chevalier, et à Monsieur le Comte de Rochambeau, les efforts combinés de l'armée Française et Americaine doivent se porter sur New York, et vous êtes instamment prié de vous rendre immédiatement à Sandy Hook.

2°. Suivant les informations qui m'ont été récemment fournies par le Gouverneur de la Virginie, la ville de Charleston est prise; les ennemis embarquent une partie des troupes qui en ont fait la conquête, et d'après la certitude où nous sommes que la destination de votre escadre leur est connue, il semble que cet embarquement pourrait bien avoir pour objet de renforcer la garnison New York.

3°. La somme de leurs forces navales sur ce continent se borne à trois vaisseaux de ligne, un de 50 canons, deux de 44, et quelques frégates à Charleston; un vaisseau de 74 et quelques frégates, sortis de New York depuis trois semaines et dont nous ignorons la destination.

Ainsi, Monsieur le Chevalier, la première de ces considérations vous invite à Sandy Hook; la seconde réclame votre atterrage sur un point d'où vous puissiez être en mesure d'intercepter les secours destinés pour New York; et la troisième vous offre un terme de comparaison entre la plus grande force qui puisse escorter ces secours, et cette avec laquelle vous pouvez les attaquer. Il est enclore à observer qu' excepté les trois vaisseaux de ligne, tous les autres (à Charleston) sont dans le port, et que les plus gros n'en peuvent sortir, qu'après avoir été allégés, et avec la concurrence d'une haute marrée et d'un vent propice.

Telles sont, Monsieur le Chevalier, les choses dont ma mission a pour objet de vous rendre compte, et comme il est de toute importance que ces informations vous parviennent le plus tôt possible, j'ai cru ne pas devoir négliger la probabilité, qui s'offre de les faire dévancer votre arrivée.

En supposant, Monsieur le Chevalier, que le fier Rodrique vous rencontre et que vous jugiez à propos de vous rendre en droiture à Sandy Hook, il est un moyen de faire que les dépêches qui vous attendant à Rhode Island et du Cap Henry vous parviennent aussi promptement qui si vous aviez atterri à l'un de ces deux points: ce serait de dépêcher, vers l'un

ou l'autre, l'un de vos plus legers vaisseaux qui recevrait à son bord l'officier chargé de ces dépêches, et vous irait rejoindre vers Sandy Hook, ou vraisemblablement il se rendrait aussitôt que votre flotte, où du moins beaucoup plustôt que les réponses de Général Washington ou de Monsieur le Marquis de Lafayette, aux lettres qui leur annonceraient votre arrivée.

Si le Cap Henry etait le point choisi, j'oserais vous prier, Monsieur le Chevalier, afin d'éviter tous délais, d'ordonner qu'à la vue, du signal que vous savez, le vaisseau y réponde par un signal contraire, je veux dire en avertissant la position des pavillons: qu'il envoie sa chaloupe à terre avec un officier muni des mots de reconnaissance; que cet officier me donne la première partie de ces mots et reçoive de moi la seconde. Par là je crois, Monsieur le Chevalier, que toute possibilité de surprise est sauvée, de part et d'autre, sans qu'il y ait un seul instant de perdre par le cérémonial de la reconnaissance.

TO BARON STEUBEN

WHIPPANY, June 25, 1780.

DEAR BARON:

The enemy, the day before yesterday, made a forward movement to Springfield, which they burnt, and retired to Elizabethtown Point. The same evening they crossed over to Staten Island, and there are a great many concurring circumstances which make it probable we shall next hear of them on the North River. As you are at West Point the General

wishes you to remain there until the present appearances come to some result. He has confidence in your judgment, and wishes you to give your advice and assistance to the commanding officer. As you have no command in the post you can only do this in a private, friendly way; but I dare say General Howe will be happy to consult you. You will consider this as a private letter, in which I rather convey you the General's wishes than his commands.

All the army is in march toward you, and will be at Pompton this evening.

TO BARON STEUBEN.

HEADQUARTERS, RAMAPO, June 30, 1780.

Agreeably to your request, my dear Baron, I communicated your project to the General. Happily the inactivity of the enemy has given us time to make dispositions which render the calling out of the militia unnecessary, and the whole has been accordingly countermanded.

The General requests that when you have completed the object of your errand in your department, and put things in train, you will rejoin the army.

I wrote you a line from Whippany, of which you made no mention.

TO GENERAL ANTHONY WAYNE

July 6, 1780.

DEAR GENERAL:

Doctor W. Mendy is one of those characters that for its honesty, simplicity, and helplessness interests

my humanity. He is exceedingly anxious to be in the service, and, I believe, has been forced out of it not altogether by fair play. He is just what I should like for a military parson, except that he does not drink. He will fight, and he will not insist upon your going to heaven whether you will or not. He tells me there is a vacancy in your brigade. I should be really happy if, through your influence, he can fill it. Pray take care of the good old man.[1]

TO BARON STEUBEN

HEADQUARTERS, July 23, 1780.

I have received, my dear Baron, your two letters of the sixteenth and eighteenth. On the formation of the light infantry, the General has already written to you. I presume it will be, ultimately, nearly as you have proposed.

Smith set out some days since to join you. Bradford, I am told, is undecided about entering into the office. Col. Scammel has promised to bring him to me, and if he accepts, we will forward him. I believe Prescott will be appointed in the light infantry. *Entre nous*, 't is not easy to find good majors for this corps in the Massachusetts Line, and as it will act a good deal with the French troops, we wish it (for this additional reason) to be well officered. Prescott will answer the purpose: but he is not yet to know that he is in contemplation. We shall not long continue in our present position. The distinctions of

[1] Now first printed from the original in the Wayne MSS. I owe this letter to the kindness of the Hon. George Bancroft.

departments are an old story, which now do not exist except with respect to South Carolina. You are with a detachment of the main army.

I dare say all you are doing will be found right. I shall join my *beau-père* to save you from the cord. The arrangement for your department was unfortunately sent to Congress soon after you went from here, with the most pressing instances to determine upon it without delay. We have heard nothing of it since. We have repeated our *prayers* and *exhortations*. If we get no answer in three or four days, we must determine for ourselves.

Major Francis is returned from Philadelphia, but I have not seen him since the arrival of your letters. I will move the inquiry you wish when I see him. Can you do any thing for him in your department?

A severe stroke upon us is, that our arms expected from France are not arrived. I do not know how we shall be able to arm our recruits.

Graves sailed from the Hook the nineteenth. We had been playing off and on two days.

TO MISS SCHUYLER [1]

September 6, 1780.

Most people here are groaning under a very disagreeable piece of intelligence just come from the southward, that Gates has had a total defeat near

[1] Miss Elizabeth Schuyler, whom Hamilton met first at Albany on his mission to Gates in 1777. She was the daughter of General Philip Schuyler. At the time of this letter she and Hamilton were engaged and they were married Dec. 14, 1780.

Camden, in South Carolina. Cornwallis and he met in the night of the fifteenth, by accident, marching to the same point. The advanced guards skirmished, and the two armies halted and formed till morning. In the morning a battle ensued, in which the militia, and Gates with them, immediately ran away, and left the Continental troops to contend with the enemy's whole force.

They did it obstinately, and probably are most of them cut off. Gates, however, who writes to Congress, seems to know very little what has become of his army. He showed that age and the long labors and fatigues of a military life had not in the least impaired his activity, for in three days and a half he reached Hillsborough, one hundred and eighty miles from the scene of action, leaving all his troops to take care of themselves, and get out of the scrape as well as they could.

He has confirmed, in this instance, the opinion I always had of him. This event will have very serious consequences to the southward. People's imaginations have already given up North Carolina and Virginia; but I do not believe either of them will fall. I am certain Virginia cannot. This misfortune affects me less than others, because it is not in my temper to repine at evils that are past, but to endeavor to draw good out of them, and because I think our safety depends on a total change of system, and this change of system will only be produced by misfortune.

TO JAMES DUANE

September 6, 1780.

My Dear Sir:

The letter accompanying this has lain by two or three days for want of an opportunity. I have heard since of Gates' defeat: a very good comment on the necessity of changing our system. His passion for militia, I fancy, will be a little cured, and he will cease to think them the best bulwark of American liberty. What think you of the conduct of this great man? I am his enemy personally, for unjust and unprovoked attacks upon my character; therefore what I say of him ought to be received as from an enemy, and have no more weight than as it is consistent with fact and common sense. But did ever any one hear of such a disposition or such a flight? His best troops placed on the side strongest by nature, his worst on that weakest by nature, and his attack made with these. 'T is impossible to give a more complete picture of military absurdity. It is equally against the maxims of war and common sense. We see the consequences. His left ran away, and left his right uncovered. His right wing turned on the left has in all probability been cut off. Though, in truth, the General seems to have known very little what became of his army. Had he placed his militia on his right, supported by the morass, and his Continental troops on his left, where it seems he was most vulnerable, his right would have been more secure, and his left would have opposed the enemy; and instead of going backward when he ordered to attack, would have gone for-

ward. The reverse of what has happened might have happened.

But was there ever an instance of a general running away, as Gates has done, from his whole army? And was there ever so precipitate a flight? One hundred and eighty miles in three days and a half. It does admirable credit to the activity of a man at his time of life. But it disgraces the general and the soldier. I have always believed him to be very far short of a Hector, or a Ulysses. All the world, I think, will begin to agree with me.

But what will be done by Congress? Will he be changed or not? If he is changed, for God's sake overcome prejudice, and send Greene. You know my opinion of him. I stake my reputation on the events, give him but fair play.

But, above all things, let us have, without delay, a vigorous government, and a well constituted army for the war.

TO WASHINGTON

VERPLANCK'S POINT, Sept. 25, 1780.

DEAR SIR:

You will see by the enclosed that we are too late. Arnold went by water to the *Vulture*. I shall write to General Greene, advising him, without making a bustle, to be in readiness to march, and even to detach a brigade this way; for, though I do not believe the project will go on, yet it is possible Arnold has made such dispositions with the garrison as may tempt the enemy, in its present weakness, to make the stroke this night, and it seems prudent to be

providing against it. I shall endeavor to find Meigs, and request him to march to the garrison, and shall make some arrangements here. I hope your Excellency will approve these steps, as there may be no time to be lost. The *Vulture* is gone down to New York.[1]

TO GENERAL GREENE

VERPLANCK'S POINT, 25th Sept., 1780.

DEAR SIR:

There has just been unfolded at this place a scene of the blackest treason. Arnold has fled to the enemy—André, the British Adjutant-General, is in our possession as a spy. His capture unravelled the mystery.

West Point was to have been the sacrifice. All the dispositions have been made for the purpose, and 't is possible, though not probable, we may still see the execution. The wind is fair. I came here in pursuit of Arnold, but was too late. I advise your putting the army under marching orders and detaching a brigade immediately this way.

TO MISS SCHUYLER

September 25, 1780.

Arnold, hearing of the plot being detected, immediately fled to the enemy. I went in pursuit of him,

[1] This letter is reprinted from the *Writings of Washington*, vii., 215. It is also given without date in the *History of the Republic*, ii., 55. Hamilton had been sent, as soon as Arnold's escape was known, to Verplanck's Point to try to intercept him, and this letter was written on his arrival, which he found was too late, for the bird had flown and was safe on board the *Vulture*, an English sloop-of-war.

but was much too late; and could hardly regret the disappointment, when, on my return, I saw an amiable woman, frantic with distress for the loss of a husband she tenderly loved; a traitor to his country and to his fame; a disgrace to his connections: it was the most affecting scene I ever was witness to. She, for a considerable time, entirely lost herself. The General went up to see her, and she upbraided him with being in a plot to murder her child. One moment she raved, another she melted into tears. Sometimes she pressed her infant to her bosom, and lamented its fate, occasioned by the imprudence of its father, in a manner that would have pierced insensibility itself. All the sweetness of beauty, all the loveliness of innocence, all the tenderness of a wife, and all the fondness of a mother showed themselves in her appearance and conduct. We have every reason to believe that she was entirely unacquainted with the plan, and that the first knowledge of it was when Arnold went to tell her he must banish himself from his country and from her forever. She instantly fell into a convulsion, and he left her in that situation.

This morning she is more composed. I paid her a visit, and endeavored to sooth her by every method in my power, though you may imagine she is not easily to be consoled. Added to her other distresses, she is very apprehensive the resentment of her country will fall upon her (who is only unfortunate) for the guilt of her husband.

I have tried to persuade her that her fears are ill-founded, but she will not be convinced. She

received us in bed, with every circumstance that would interest our sympathy; and her sufferings were so eloquent, that I wished myself her brother, to have a right to become her defender. As it is, I have entreated her to enable me to give her proofs of my friendship. Could I forgive Arnold for sacrificing his honor, reputation, and duty, I could not forgive him for acting a part that must have forfeited the esteem of so fine a woman. At present she almost forgets his crime in his misfortunes; and her horror at the guilt of the traitor is lost in her love of the man. But a virtuous mind cannot long esteem a base one; and time will make her despise if it cannot make her hate.

TO MISS SCHUYLER

TAPPAN, Oct. 2, 1780.

Poor André suffers to-day. Every thing that is amiable in virtue, in fortitude, in delicate sentiment, and accomplished manners, pleads for him; but hard-hearted policy calls for a sacrifice. He must die——. I send you my account of Arnold's affair; and to justify myself to your sentiments, I must inform you that I urged a compliance with André's request to be shot; and I do not think it would have had an ill effect; but some people are only sensible to motives of policy, and sometimes, from a narrow disposition, mistake it.

When André's tale comes to be told, and present resentment is over, the refusing him the privilege of

choosing the manner of his death will be branded with too much obstinacy.

It was proposed to me to suggest to him the idea of an exchange for Arnold; but I knew I should have forfeited his esteem by doing it, and therefore declined it. As a man of honor, he could but reject it, and I would not for the world have proposed to him a thing which must have placed me in the unamiable light of supposing him capable of meanness, or of not feeling myself the impropriety of the measure. I confess to you I had the weakness to value the esteem of a dying man, because I reverenced his merit.

TO JOHN LAURENS [1]

October, 1780.

Since my return from Hartford, my dear Laurens, my mind has been too little at ease to permit me to write to you sooner. It has been wholly occupied by the affecting and tragic consequences of Arnold's treason. My feelings were never put to so severe a trial. You will no doubt have heard the principal facts before this reaches you. But there are particulars, to which my situation gave me access, that cannot have come to your knowledge from public report, which I am persuaded you will find interesting.

From several circumstances, the project seems to

[1] This letter is the best description extant of Arnold's treason, and all the accompanying incidents. It is admirably written, and shows, in a striking way, Hamilton's literary skill. In the edition of 1850 it is dated September, which is an obvious error, as André was not executed until October 2d, and this letter describes his execution.

have originated with Arnold himself, and to have been long premeditated. The first overture is traced back to some time in June last. It was conveyed in a letter to Colonel Robinson, the substance of which was that the ingratitude he had experienced from his country, concurring with other causes, had entirely changed his principles; that he now only sought to restore himself to the favor of his king by some signal proof of his repentance, and would be happy to open a correspondence with Sir Henry Clinton for that purpose. About this period he made a journey to Connecticut, on his return from which to Philadelphia, he solicited the command of West Point, alleging that the effects of his wounds had disqualified him for the active duties of the field. The sacrifice of this important post was the atonement he intended to make. General Washington hesitated the less to gratify an officer who had rendered such eminent services, as he was convinced the post might be safely intrusted to one who had given so many distinguished specimens of his bravery. In the beginning of August he joined the army, and renewed his application. The enemy, at this juncture, had embarked the greatest part of their forces on an expedition to Rhode Island, and our army was in motion to compel them to relinquish the enterprise, or to attack New York in its weakened state. The General offered Arnold the left wing of the army, which he declined, on the pretext already mentioned, but not without visible embarrassment. He certainly might have executed the duties of such a temporary command, and it was expected, from

his enterprising temper, that he would gladly have embraced so splendid an opportunity. But he did not choose to be diverted a moment from his favorite object, probably from an apprehension that some different disposition might have taken place, which would have excluded him. The extreme solicitude he discovered to get possession of the post would have led to a suspicion of treachery, had it been possible from his past conduct to have supposed him capable of it.

The correspondence thus begun was carried on between Arnold and Major André, Adjutant-General to the British army, in behalf of Sir Henry Clinton, under feigned signatures, and in a mercantile disguise. In an intercepted letter of Arnold's, which lately fell into our hands, he proposes an interview, "to settle the risks and profits of the copartnership," and, in the same style of metaphor, intimates an expected augmentation of the garrison, and speaks of it as the means of extending their traffic. It appears, by another letter, that André was to have met him on the lines, under the sanction of a flag, in the character of Mr. John Anderson. But some cause or other not known prevented this interview.

The twentieth of last month, Robinson [1] and André went up the river in the *Vulture*, sloop-of-war. Robinson sent a flag to Arnold with two letters: one to General Putnam, inclosed in another to himself,

[1] Beverly Robinson, son of John Robinson of Virginia. He married Susanna Phillipse and thus acquired fortune and part of the famous Phillipse estate. He was a strong Tory and colonel of the regiment of Royal Americans in the British service. After the Revolution he fled to England, where he died.

proposing an interview with Putnam, or, in his absence, with Arnold, to adjust some private concerns. The one to General Putnam was evidently meant as a cover to the other, in case, by accident, the letters should have fallen under the inspection of a third person.

General Washington crossed the river on his way to Hartford the day these despatches arrived. Arnold, conceiving he must have heard of the flag, thought it necessary, for the sake of appearances, to submit the letters to him, and ask his opinion of the propriety of complying with the request. The General, with his usual caution, though without the least surmise of the design, dissuaded him from it, and advised him to reply to Robinson that whatever related to his private affairs must be of a civil nature, and could only be properly addressed to the civil authority. This reference fortunately deranged the plan, and was the first link in the chain of events that led to the detection. The interview could no longer take place in the form of a flag, but was obliged to be managed in a secret manner.

Arnold employed one Smith [1] to go on board the *Vulture* on the night of the twenty-second, to bring André on shore, with a pass for Mr. John Anderson. André came ashore accordingly, and was conducted within a picket of ours to the house of Smith, where Arnold and he remained together in close conference all that night and the day following. At daylight,

[1] Joshua H. Smith, who had been employed by General Howe, Arnold's predecessor, to gather intelligence. He had always been thought a loyal man, but Arnold succeeded in corrupting him.

in the morning, the commanding officer at King's Ferry, without the privity of Arnold, moved a couple of pieces of cannon to a point opposite to where the *Vulture* lay, and obliged her to take a more remote station. This event, or some lurking distrust, made the boatmen refuse to convey the two passengers back, and disconcerted Arnold so much that, by one of those strokes of infatuation which often confound the schemes of men conscious of guilt, he insisted on André's exchanging his uniform for a disguise, and returning in a mode different from that in which he came. André, who had been undesignedly brought within our posts in the first instance, remonstrated warmly against this new and dangerous expedient. But Arnold persisting in declaring it impossible for him to return as he came, he at length reluctantly yielded to his direction, and consented to change his dress and take the route he recommended. Smith furnished the disguise, and in the evening passed King's Ferry with him and proceeded to Crompond,[1] where they stopped the remainder of the night, at the instance of a militia officer,[2] to avoid being suspected by him. The next morning they resumed their journey, Smith accompanying André a little beyond Pine's Bridge, where he left him. He had reached Tarrytown, when he was taken up by three militiamen,[3] who rushed out of the woods and seized his horse.

At this critical moment his presence of mind

[1] A place about eight miles from Verplanck's Point.
[2] Captain Boyd.
[3] Paulding, Van Wart, and Williams.

forsook him. Instead of producing his pass, which would have extricated him from our parties, and could have done him no harm with his own, he asked the militiamen if they were of the *upper* or *lower* party; descriptive appellations known among the enemy's refugee corps. The militiamen replied they were of the lower party, upon which he told them he was a British officer, and pressed them not to detain him, as he was upon urgent business. This confession removed all doubts, and it was in vain he afterwards produced his pass. He was instantly forced off to a place of greater security, where, after a careful search, there were found concealed in the feet of his stockings several papers of importance, delivered to him by Arnold! Among these were a plan of the fortifications of West Point; a memorial from the engineer on the attack and defence of the place; returns of the garrison, cannon, and stores; copy of the minutes of a council of war held by General Washington a few weeks before. The prisoner at first was inadvertently ordered to Arnold, but on recollection, while still on the way, he was countermanded and sent to Old Salem. The papers were enclosed in a letter to General Washington, which, having taken a route different from that by which he returned, made a circuit that afforded leisure for another letter, through an ill-judged delicacy, written to Arnold with information of Anderson's capture, to get to him an hour before General Washington arrived at his quarters; time enough to elude the fate that awaited him. He went down the river on his barge to the *Vulture* with such precipitate con-

fusion that he did not take with him a single paper useful to the enemy. On the first notice of the affair he was pursued, but much too late to be overtaken.

There was some color for imagining that it was a part of the plan to betray the General into the hands of the enemy. Arnold was very anxious to ascertain from him the precise day of his return, and the enemy's movements seem to have corresponded to this point. But if it was really the case it was very injudicious. The success must have depended on surprise, and as the officers at the advanced posts were not in the secret their measures might have given the alarm, and General Washington, taking the command of the post, might have rendered the whole scheme abortive. Arnold, it is true, had so dispersed the garrison as to have made a defence difficult but not impracticable; and the acquisition of West Point was of such magnitude to the enemy that it would have been unwise to connect it with any other object, however great, which might make the obtaining of it precarious.

Arnold, a moment before the setting out, went into Mrs. Arnold's apartment, and informed her that some transactions had just come to light which must forever banish him from his country. She fell into a swoon at this declaration: and he left her in it to consult his own safety, till the servants, alarmed by her cries, came to her relief. She remained frantic all day, accusing every one who approached her with an intention to murder her child (an infant in her arms), and exhibiting every other mark of the

most genuine and agonizing distress. Exhausted by the fatigue and tumult of her spirits, her phrensy subsided towards evening, and she sank into all the sadness of affliction. It was impossible not to have been touched with her situation. Every thing affecting in female tears, or in the misfortunes of beauty; every thing pathetic in the wounded tenderness of a wife, or in the apprehensive fondness of a mother; and, till I have reason to change the opinion, I will add, every thing amiable in suffering innocence[1] conspired to make her an object of sympathy to all who were present. She experienced the most delicate attentions and every friendly office, till her departure for Philadelphia.

André was, without loss of time, conducted to the headquarters of the army, where he was immediately brought before a Board of General Officers, to prevent all possibility of misrepresentation, or cavil on the part of the enemy. The Board reported that he ought to be considered as a spy, and, according to the laws of nations, to suffer death, which was executed two days after.

Never, perhaps, did a man suffer death with more justice, or deserve it less. The first step he took after his capture was to write a letter to General Washington, conceived in terms of dignity without insolence, and apology without meanness. The scope of it was to vindicate himself from the imputation of having assumed a mean character for treacherous or interested purposes; asserting that he had been in-

[1] Mrs. Arnold, as Hamilton supposed, was undoubtedly free from all complicity in her husband's treason.

voluntarily an impostor; that contrary to his intention, which was to meet a person for intelligence on neutral ground, he had been betrayed within our posts, and forced into the vile condition of an enemy in disguise; soliciting only that, to whatever rigor policy might devote him, a decency of treatment might be observed, due to a person who, though unfortunate, had been guilty of nothing dishonorable. His request was granted in its full extent; for, in the whole progress of the affair, he was treated with the most scrupulous delicacy. When brought before the Board of Officers he met with every mark of indulgence, and was required to answer no interrogatory which could even embarrass his feelings. On his part, while he carefully concealed every thing that might involve others, he frankly confessed all the facts relating to himself; and,upon his confession, without the trouble of examining a witness, the Board made their report. The members of it were not more impressed with the candor and firmness, mixed with a becoming sensibility, which he displayed, than he was penetrated with their liberality and politeness. He acknowledged the generosity of the behavior towards him in every respect, but particularly in this, in the strongest terms of manly gratitude. In a conversation with a gentleman who visited him after his trial, he said he flattered himself he had never been illiberal; but if there were any remains of prejudice in his mind, his present experience must obliterate them.

In one of the visits I made to him (and I saw him several times during his confinement), he begged me

to be the bearer of a request to the General, for permission to send an open letter to Sir Henry Clinton. "I foresee my fate," said he, "and though I pretend not to play the hero, or to be indifferent about life, yet I am reconciled to whatever may happen, conscious that misfortune, not guilt, has brought it upon me. There is only one thing that disturbs my tranquillity. Sir Henry Clinton has been too good to me; he has been lavish of his kindness. I am bound to him by too many obligations, and love him too well, to bear the thought that he should reproach himself, or that others should reproach him, on the supposition of my having conceived myself obliged, by his instructions, to run the risk I did. I would not for the world leave a sting in his mind that should imbitter his future days." He could scarce finish the sentence, bursting into tears in spite of his efforts to suppress them, and with difficulty collected himself enough afterwards to add, "I wish to be permitted to assure him I did not act under this impression, but submitted to a necessity imposed upon me, as contrary to my own inclination as by his orders." His request was readily complied with, and he wrote the letter annexed, with which I dare say you will be as much pleased as I am, both for the diction and sentiment.

When his sentence was announced to him he remarked that since it was his lot to die, there was still a choice in the mode, which would make a material difference in his feelings, and he would be happy, if possible, to be indulged with a professional death. He made a second application, by letter, in

concise but persuasive terms. It was thought this indulgence, being incompatible with the customs of war, could not be granted, and it was therefore determined, in both cases, to evade an answer, to spare him the sensations which a certain knowledge of the intended mode would inflict.

In going to the place of execution, he bowed familiarly as he went along, to all those with whom he had been acquainted in his confinement. A smile of complacency expressed the serene fortitude of his mind. Arrived at the fatal spot, he asked,with some emotion, "Must I then die in this manner?" He was told that it had been unavoidable. "I am reconciled to my fate," said he, "but not to the mode." Soon, however, recollecting himself, he added: "It will be but a momentary pang," and, springing upon the cart, performed the last offices to himself, with a composure that excited the admiration and melted the hearts of the beholders. Upon being told that the final moment was at hand, and asked if he had anything to say, he answered: "Nothing but to request you will witness to the world that I die like a brave man." Among the extraordinary circumstances that attended him, in the midst of his enemies, he died universally esteemed and universally regretted.

There was something singularly interesting in the character and fortunes of André. To an excellent understanding, well improved by education and travel, he united a peculiar elegance of mind and manners, and the advantage of a pleasing person. 'T is said he possessed a pretty taste for the fine arts,

and had himself attained some proficiency in poetry, music, and painting. His knowledge appeared without ostentation, and embellished by a diffidence that rarely accompanies so many talents and accomplishments: which left you to suppose more than appeared. His sentiments were elevated, and inspired esteem: they had a softness that conciliated affection. His elocution was handsome; his address easy, polite, and insinuating. By his merit he had acquired the unlimited confidence of his general, and was making a rapid progress in military rank and reputation. But in the height of his career, flushed with new hopes from the execution of a project, the most beneficial to his party that could be devised, he was at once precipitated from the summit of prosperity, and saw all the expectations of his ambition blasted, and himself ruined.

The character I have given of him, is drawn partly from what I saw of him myself, and partly from information. I am aware that a man of real merit is never seen in so favorable a light as through the medium of adversity: the clouds that surround him are shades that set off his good qualities. Misfortune cuts down the little vanities that, in prosperous times serve as so many spots in his virtues; and gives a tone of humility that makes his worth more amiable. His spectators, who enjoy a happier lot, are less prone to detract from it, through envy, and are more disposed, by compassion, to give him the credit he deserves, and perhaps even to magnify it.

I speak not of André's conduct in this affair as a philosopher, but as a man of the world. The au-

thorized maxims and practices of war are the satires of human nature. They countenance almost every species of seduction as well as violence; and the general who can make most traitors in the army of his adversary is frequently most applauded.

On this scale we acquit André; while we could not but condemn him, if we were to examine his conduct by the sober rules of philosophy and moral rectitude. It is, however, a blemish on his fame, that he once intended to prostitute a flag: about this, a man of nice honor ought to have had a scruple; but the temptation was great: let his misfortunes cast a veil over his error.

Several letters from Sir Henry Clinton, and others, were received in the course of the affair, feebly attempting to prove that André came out under the protection of a flag, with a passport from a general officer in active service; and consequently could not be justly detained. Clinton sent a deputation, composed of Lieutenant-General Robinson, Mr. Elliot, and Mr. William Smith, to represent, as he said, the true state of Major André's case. General Greene met Robinson, and had a conversation with him, in which he reiterated the pretence of a flag, urged André's release as a personal favor to Sir Henry Clinton, and offered any friend of ours in their power in exchange. Nothing could have been more frivolous than the plea which was used. The fact was, that beside the time, manner, object of the interview, change of dress, and other circumstances, there was not a single formality customary with flags; and the passport was not to Major André, but to Mr.

Anderson. But had there been, on the contrary, all the formalities, it would be an abuse of language to say that the sanction of a flag for corrupting an officer to betray his trust, ought to be respected. So unjustifiable a purpose would not only destroy its validity, but make it an aggravation.

André, himself, has answered the argument, by ridiculing and exploding the idea, in his examination before the Board of Officers. It was a weakness to urge it.

There was, in truth, no way of saving him. Arnold or he must have been the victim; the former was out of our power.

It was by some suspected Arnold had taken his measures in such a manner, that if the interview had been discovered in the act, it might have been in his power to sacrifice André to his own security. This surmise of double treachery made them imagine Clinton might be induced to give up Arnold for André; and a gentleman took occasion to suggest this expedient to the latter as a thing that might be proposed by him. He declined it. The moment he had been capable of so much frailty, I should have ceased to esteem him.

The infamy of Arnold's conduct previous to his desertion is only equalled by his baseness since. Beside the folly of writing to Sir Henry Clinton, assuring him that André had acted under a passport from him, and according to his directions while commanding officer at a post, and that, therefore, he did not doubt he would be immediately sent in, he had the effrontery to write to General Washington in the

same spirit, with the addition of a menace of retaliation, if the sentence should be carried into execution. He has since acted the farce of sending in his resignation. This man is, in every sense, despicable. Added to the scene of knavery and prostitution during his command in Philadelphia, which the late seizure of his papers has unfolded, the history of his command at West Point is a history of little, as well as great villainies. He practised every dirty art of peculation, and even stooped to connections with the sutlers of the garrison to defraud the public.

To his conduct, that of the captors of André forms a striking contrast. He tempted them with the offer of his watch, his horse, and any sum of money they should name. They rejected his offers with indignation, and the gold that could seduce a man high in the esteem and confidence of his country, who had the remembrance of past exploits, the motives of present reputation and future glory, to prop his integrity, had no charms for three simple peasants, leaning only on their virtue and an honest sense of their duty. While Arnold is handed down with execration to future times, posterity will repeat with reverence the names of Van Wart, Paulding, and Williams.

I congratulate you, my friend, on our happy escape from the mischiefs with which this treason was big. It is a new comment on the value of an honest man, and, if it were possible, would endear you to me more than ever.

TO ISAAC SEARS [1]

Oct. 12, 1780.

I was much obliged to you, my dear sir, for the letter which you did me the favor to write me since your return to Boston. I am sorry to find that the same spirit of indifference to public affairs prevails. It is necessary we should rouse and begin to do our business in earnest, or we shall play a losing game. It is impossible the contest can be much longer supported on the present footing. We must have a government with more power. We must have a tax in kind. We must have a foreign loan. We must have a bank—on the true principles of a bank. We must have an administration distinct from Congress, and in the hands of single men under their orders. We must, above all things, have an army for the war, and an establishment that will interest the officers in the service.

Congress are deliberating on our military affairs; but I apprehend their resolutions will be tinctured with the old spirit. We seem to be proof against experience. They will, however, recommend an army for the war, at least, as a primary object. All those who love their country ought to exert their influence in the States where they reside, to determine them to take up this object with energy. The States must sink under the burden of temporary enlistments; and the enemy will conquer us by degrees during the intervals of our weakness.

Clinton is now said to be making a considerable

[1] Isaac Sears was one of the early patriot leaders in New York, but never rose into distinction afterwards.

detachment to the southward. My fears are high, my hopes low. We are told here there is to be a congress of the neutral powers at the Hague, for mediating of peace. God send it may be true. We want it; but if the idea goes abroad, ten to one if we do not fancy the thing done, and fall into a profound sleep till the cannon of the enemy awaken us next campaign. This is our national character.

TO JAMES DUANE

October 18, 1780.

My Dear Sir:

Since my last to you, I have had the pleasure of receiving two letters from you. I am sorry to find we do not seem to agree in the proper remedies to our disorder, at least, in the practicability of applying those which are proper. Convinced, as I am, of the absolute insufficiency of our present system to our safety, if I do not despair of the republic, it is more the effect of constitution than of judgment.

With the sentiments I entertain of Gates, I cannot but take pleasure in his removal; and with the confidence I have in Greene, I expect much from his being the successor; at least, I expect all his circumstances will permit. You seem to have mistaken me on the subject of this gentleman. When I spoke of prejudice, I did not suppose it to exist with you, but with Congress as a body—at least with a great part of them. The part they have taken in the affair, in my opinion, does honor to their impartiality. I hope they will support the officer appointed with a liberal confidence; his situation, surrounded

with difficulties, will need support. Of your influence for this purpose, I am too thoroughly persuaded of your patriotism, my dear sir, to doubt.

Be assured, my dear sir, the marks of your regard give me a sincere pleasure, and I shall be always happy to cultivate it, and to give you proofs of my affectionate attachment.

TO WASHINGTON

November 22, 1780.

DEAR SIR:

Some time last fall, when I spoke to your Excellency about going to the southward, I explained to you candidly my feelings with respect to military reputation, and how much it was my object to act a conspicuous part in some enterprise that might perhaps raise my character as a soldier above mediocrity. You were so good as to say you would be glad to furnish me with an occasion. When the expedition to Staten Island was afoot, a favorable one seemed to offer. There was a battalion without a field officer, the command of which, I thought, as it was accidental, might be given to me without inconvenience. I made an application for it through the Marquis,[1] who informed me of your refusal on two principles—one, that the giving me a whole battalion might be a subject of dissatisfaction; the other, that if any accident should happen to me, in the present state of your family, you would be embarrassed for the necessary assistance.

The project you now have in contemplation affords

[1] Lafayette.

another opportunity. I have a variety of reasons that press me to desire ardently to have it in my power to improve it. I take the liberty to observe that the command may now be proportioned to my rank, and that the second objection ceases to operate, as, during the period of establishing our winter-quarters, there will be a suspension of material business; besides which, my peculiar position will, in any case, call me away from the army in a few days, and Mr. Harrison may be expected back early next month. My command may consist of one hundred and fifty or two hundred men, composed of fifty men of Major Gibbes' corps, fifty from Col. Meigs' regiment, and fifty or a hundred more from the light infantry; Major Gibbes to be my major. The hundred men from here may move on Friday morning towards——, which will strengthen the appearances for Staten Island, to form a junction on the other side of the Passaic.

I suggest this mode to avoid the complaints that might arise from composing my party wholly of the light infantry, which might give umbrage to the officers of that corps, who, on this plan, can have no just subject for it.

The primary idea may be, if circumstances permit, to attempt with my detachment Bayard's Hill. Should we arrive early enough to undertake it, I should prefer it to any thing else, both for the brilliancy of the attempt in itself and the decisive consequences of which its success would be productive. If we arrive too late to make this eligible (as there is reason to apprehend), my corps may form the van

of one of the other attacks; and Bayard's Hill will be a pretext for my being employed in the affair, on a supposition of my knowing the ground, which is partly true. I flatter myself, also, that my military character stands so well in the army as to reconcile the officers in general to the measure. All circumstances considered, I venture to say any exceptions which might be taken would be unreasonable.

I take this method of making the request to avoid the embarrassment of a personal explanation. I shall only add that, however much I have the matter at heart, I wish your Excellency entirely to consult your own inclination, and not, from a disposition to oblige me, to do any thing that may be disagreeable to you. It will, nevertheless, make me singularly happy if your wishes correspond with mine.

TO WASHINGTON

ALBANY, Dec. 9, 1780.

DEAR SIR:

Mr. Rensselaer, who has the direction of the armory here, tells me that the Board of War write him that they are unable to support it any longer on the present establishment for want of supplies, and propose to him to endeavor to have it carried on by contract. This he declares is impossible. The armory must either continue on the present footing, or cease. As far as I understand the matter, there is no objection to the terms in themselves, but a want of means to comply with them. If there is a want of means, the thing must be relinquished; but, as it

does not strike me that it can be more difficult to maintain an armory here than elsewhere, and as I apprehend, in the present state of arsenals, we shall stand in need of all the repairing we can do, I take the liberty, at Mr. Rensselaer's request, to mention the matter to you. I have seen the armory myself. It appears to be in excellent order, and under a very ingenious and industrious man. I am told it has been conducted hitherto with great activity. Its situation is, in my opinion, advantageous. As there is a considerable body of troops always at West Point, and the army generally in its vicinity, the river is very convenient for transportation to and from the armory, and I should think would be conducive to economy. This consideration strikes me as of importance. General Knox, however, will be the best judge of the usefulness of this armory.

Mr. Rensselaer also mentions a considerable number of hides in the hands of persons here who had had orders from the clothier-general not to dispose of them but by his order. He says he can no longer but with great difficulty procure leather for the public works on credit, and has requested me to mention this also to your Excellency.

Mrs. Hamilton presents her respectful compliments to Mrs. Washington and yourself. After the holidays, we shall be at headquarters.

I believe I imparted to you General Schuyler's wish that you could make it convenient to pay a visit with Mrs. Washington this winter. He and Mrs. Schuyler have several times repeated their inquiries and wishes. I have told them I was afraid

your business would not permit you; if it should, I shall be happy. You will enable me to let them know about what period it will suit. When the sleighing arrives, it will be an affair of two days up and two days down.

TO ———

HEADQUARTERS, Feb. 7, 1781.

DEAR SIR:

The first step to reformation, as well in an administration as in an individual, is to be sensible of our faults. This begins to be our case, and there are several symptoms that please me at this juncture. But we are so accustomed to doing right by halves, and spoiling a good intention in the execution, that I always wait to see the end of our public arrangements before I venture to expect good or evil from them. The plan of executive ministers is undoubtedly a good one, and by some men has been fruitlessly insisted upon for three or four years back; but whether it will work a present good or evil must depend on the choice of the persons. This is a bad omen. I am not at all informed of the persons in nomination.

The accession of Maryland to the Confederacy will be a happy event if it does not make people believe that the Confederacy gives Congress power enough and prevent their acquiring more. If it has this effect it will be an evil, for it is unequal to the exigencies of the war or to the preservation of the Union hereafter. The cession of territory by Virginia ought

to have an important influence. New York is about to make a similar cession. It is now before the Legislature and will probably be adopted.

The late disturbances in the army and disquietudes in the State of New York, which are with difficulty diverted, show that the republic is sick and wants powerful remedies. God send that the negotiation abroad for money may succeed, for it is only this that can give success to our interior efforts.

Paper credit cannot be supported without pecuniary funds. Back lands are a very good resource in reserve, but I suspect they will not have so much present efficacy as is imagined. I only regard the acquisition of territory to Congress as useful so far as it enables them to procure credit.

The Eastern States are really making great exertions towards the next campaign.

Have the goodness to assure the Chevalier De la Luzerne of my sincere respect and attachment, and do justice to the sentiments for you personally with which I have the honor to be, etc.[1]

[1] This letter is now first printed from the mutilated original in the possession of a gentleman in New York, to whose kindness I am indebted for the opportunity to publish it. I am unable to give the name of my kind correspondent, as his note, which accompanied the copy of the letter, has been unfortunately lost—a circumstance which I cannot sufficiently regret.

TO PHILIP SCHUYLER [1]

HEADQUARTERS, NEW WINDSOR, February 18, 1781.

MY DEAR SIR:

Since I had the pleasure of writing you last, an unexpected change has taken place in my situation. I am no longer a member of the General's family. This information will surprise you, and the manner of the change will surprise you more. Two days ago, the General and I passed each other on the stairs. He told me he wanted to speak to me. I answered that I would wait upon him immediately. I went below, and delivered Mr. Tilghman a letter to be sent to the commissary, containing an order of a pressing and interesting nature.

Returning to the General, I was stopped on the way by the Marquis de La Fayette, and we conversed together about a minute on a matter of business. He can testify how impatient I was to get back, and that I left him in a manner which, but for our intimacy, would have been more than abrupt. Instead of finding the General, as is usual, in his

[1] This famous letter to Hamilton's father-in-law, General Schuyler, is now printed entire. It would have been perfectly justifiable to have destroyed or suppressed this letter altogether, for it was written by Hamilton when he was very angry, and had lost control of himself, so that the opinions here expressed do not in the least represent his real feeling about Washington, for whom he had the deepest reverence and affection, either at this or any other time. As Mr. J. C. Hamilton, however, saw fit to publish the letter, he should not have suppressed part; he should have given all or nothing. It is given here in its entirety from a copy of the original, made by Mr. James A. Hamilton, and which I found among the papers of my grandfather, Mr. Henry Cabot. The additional paragraphs now published for the first time are enclosed in brackets.

room, I met him at the head of the stairs, where, accosting me in an angry tone, "Colonel Hamilton," said he, "you have kept me waiting at the head of the stairs these ten minutes. I must tell you, sir, you treat me with disrespect." I replied, without petulancy, but with decision: "I am not conscious of it, sir; but since you have thought it necessary to tell me so, we part." "Very well, sir," said he, "if it be your choice," or something to this effect, and we separated. I sincerely believe my absence, which gave so much umbrage, did not last two minutes.

In less than an hour after, Tilghman [1] came to me in the General's name, assuring me of his great confidence in my abilities, integrity, usefulness, etc., and of his desire, in a candid conversation, to heal a difference which could not have happened but in a moment of passion. I requested Mr. Tilghman to tell him—1st. That I had taken my resolution in a manner not to be revoked. 2d. That, as a conversation could serve no other purpose than to produce explanations, mutually disagreeable, though I certainly would not refuse an interview if he desired it, yet I would be happy if he would permit me to decline it. 3d. That, though determined to leave the family, the same principles which had kept me so long in it would continue to direct my conduct towards him when out of it. 4th. That, however, I did not wish to distress him, or the public business, by quitting him before he could derive other assistance by the return of some of the gentlemen who were absent. 5th. And that, in the mean time, it

[1] Lt.-Colonel Tench Tilghman, of Washington's staff.

depended on him to let our behavior to each other be the same as if nothing had happened. He consented to decline the conversation, and thanked me for my offer of continuing my aid in the manner I had mentioned. [Thus we stand. I wait Mr. Humphrey's return from the eastward, and may be induced to wait the return of Mr. Harrison from Virginia.]

I have given you so particular a detail of our difference from the desire I have to justify myself in your opinion. Perhaps you may think I was precipitate in rejecting the overture made by the General to an accommodation. I assure you, my dear sir, it was not the effect of resentment; it was the deliberate result of maxims I had long formed for the government of my own conduct.

I always disliked the office of an aid-de-camp as having in it a kind of personal dependence. I refused to serve in this capacity with two major-generals at an early period of the war. Infected, however, with the enthusiasm of the times, an idea of the General's character [which experience taught me to be unfounded] overcame my scruples, and induced me to *accept his invitation* to enter into his family. [It was not long before I discovered he was neither remarkable for delicacy nor good temper, which revived my former aversion to the station in which I was acting, and it has been increasing ever since.] It has been often with great difficulty that I have prevailed upon myself not to renounce it; but while, from motives of public utility, I was doing violence to my feelings, I was always determined, if

there should ever happen a breach between us, never to consent to an accommodation. I was persuaded that when once that nice barrier, which marked the boundaries of what we owed to each other, should be thrown down, it might be propped again, but could never be restored.

[I resolved, whenever it should happen, not to be in the wrong. I was convinced the concessions the General might make would be dictated by his interest, and that his self-love would never forgive me for what it would regard as a humiliation.

I believe you know the place I held in the General's confidence and counsels, which will make it the more extraordinary to you to learn that for three years past I have felt no friendship for him and have professed none. The truth is, our dispositions are the opposites of each other, and the pride of my temper would not suffer me to profess what I did not feel. Indeed, when advances of this kind have been made to me on his part, they were received in a manner that showed at least that I had no desire to court them, and that I desired to stand rather upon a footing of military confidence than of private attachment.

You are too good a judge of human nature not to be sensible how this conduct in me must have operated on a man to whom all the world is offering incense. With this key you will easily unlock the present mystery.

At the end of the war I may say many things to you concerning which I shall impose upon myself till then an inviolable silence.]

The General is a very honest man. His com-

petitors have slender abilities, and less integrity. His popularity has often been essential to the safety of America, and is still of great importance to it. These considerations have influenced my past conduct respecting him, and will influence my future. I think it is necessary he should be supported.

His estimation in your mind, whatever may be its amount, I am persuaded has been formed on principles which a circumstance like this cannot materially affect; but if I thought it could diminish your friendship for him, I should almost forego the motives that urge me to justify myself to you. I wish what I have said to make no other impression than to satisfy you I have not been in the wrong. It is also said in confidence, as a public knowledge of the breach would, in many ways, have an ill effect. It will probably be the policy of both sides to conceal it, and cover the separation with some plausible pretext. I am importuned by such of my friends as are privy to the affair, to listen to a reconciliation; but my resolution is unalterable.

As I cannot think of quitting the army during the war, I have a project of re-entering into the artillery, by taking Lieutenant-Colonel Forrest's place, who is desirous of retiring on half-pay. I have not, however, made up my mind upon this head, as I should be obliged to come in the youngest Lieutenant-Colonel instead of the eldest, which I ought to have been by natural succession, had I remained in the corps; and, at the same time, to resume studies relative to the profession, which, to avoid inferiority, must be laborious.

If a handsome command in the campaign in the light infantry should offer itself, I shall balance between this and the artillery. My situation in the latter would be more solid and permanent: but as I hope the war will not last long enough to make it progressive, this consideration has the less force. A command for the campaign would leave me the winter to prosecute studies relative to my future career in life.[1] I have written to you on this subject with all the freedom and confidence to which you have a right, and with an assurance of the interest you take in all that concerns me.

TO GENERAL GREENE

February, 1781.

DEAR GENERAL:

I acknowledge myself to have been unpardonably delinquent in not having written to you before, but my matrimonial occupations have scarcely left me leisure or inclination for any other. I must now be brief, as the post is just setting out. I shall shortly write you at large. I have not been much in the way of knowing sentiments out of the army, but as far as I am acquainted with them, either in or out, you have great reason to be satisfied. Your conduct in the southern command seems to be universally approved, and your reputation is progressive. How long this will last, the wheel of fortune will have too much in determining. I cannot tell you any thing

[1] There is a break marked here in the edition of 1850, but my copy of the original letter does not indicate any omission.

of our prospects here, because we know little about them ourselves. Hitherto we have received few recruits. I fear this campaign will be a defensive one on our part. Harrison has left the General to be a chief-justice of Maryland. I am about leaving him to be any thing that fortune may cast up—I mean in the military line. This, my dear General, is not an affair of calculation, but of feeling. You may divine the rest, and I am sure you will keep your divinations to yourself. The enemy have gotten so much in the way of intercepting our mails that I am afraid of seeing whatever I write hung up the week after in *Rivington's Gazette*. This obliges me to be cautious. Adieu. My dear General, let me beg you will believe that whatever change there may be in my situation, there will never be any in my respect, esteem, and affection for you.

P. S.—Let me know if I could find any thing worth my while to do in the southern army. You know I shall hate to be nominally a soldier.[1]

TO WASHINGTON

De Peyster's Point, April 27, 1781.

Sir:

I imagine your Excellency has been informed that in consequence of the resolution of Congress for granting commissions to aids-de-camp appointed under the former establishment, I have obtained

[1] This letter is reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, ii., 187. It has no date except the year, but was evidently written just after the disagreement with Washington, of Feb. 16th, described in the preceding letter.

one of lieutenant-colonel in the army of the United States, bearing rank since the first of March, 1777.

It is become necessary to me to apply to your Excellency to know in what manner you foresee you will be able to employ me in the ensuing campaign. I am ready to enter into activity whenever you think proper, though I am not anxious to do it till the army takes the field, as before that period I perceive no object.

Unconnected as I am with any regiment, I can have no other command than in a light corps, and I flatter myself my pretensions to this are good.

Your Excellency knows I have been in actual service since the beginning of '76. I began in the line, and had I continued there I ought in justice to have been more advanced in rank than I now am. I believe my conduct in the different capacities in which I have acted has appeared to the officers of the army in general such as to merit their confidence and esteem; and I cannot suppose them to be so ungenerous as not to see me with pleasure put into a situation still to exercise the disposition I have always had of being useful to the United States. I mention these things only to show that I do not apprehend the same difficulties can exist in my case (which is peculiar) that have opposed the appointments to commands of some other officers not belonging to what is called the line. Though the light infantry is chiefly formed, yet being detached to the southward, I take it for granted there will be a vanguard detachment formed for this army.

TO WASHINGTON

De Peyster's Point, May 2, 1781.

Sir:

I am extremely sorry to have embarrassed you by my late application, and that you should think there are insuperable obstacles to a compliance with it. Having renounced my expectations, I have no other inducement for troubling your Excellency with a second letter, than to obviate the appearance of having desired a thing inconsistent with the good of the service, while I was acquainted with the circumstances that made it so.

I was too interested a spectator of what happened in the case of Major M'Pherson, not to have remarked, and not to recollect, all the circumstances. The opposition turned ostensibly on his being a brevet officer, yet having a command in a corps formed entirely from one line; the propriety of his being employed in a detachment from the army at large, so far as I remember, was not disputed. In delicacy to Major M'Pherson, no personal objections were formally made, but in reality they existed and contributed to the discontent. It was thought a peculiar hardship that a gentleman who had for a long time fought against us, and had not taken part with us till a late period and when our affairs had assumed a more prosperous aspect, should be preferred in one of the most honorary commands of the service. Your Excellency must be convinced that I mention this in no other view than to show the sentiments of the officers at the time and the whole

grounds for the opposition. My esteem for Major M'Pherson, and other reasons, make it impossible I can have a different intention.

I know less of the motives of dissatisfaction in the case of Colonel Gimat and Major Galvan; but I have understood that it is founded on their being appointed in the light corps for two successive campaigns.

It would be uncandid in me not to acknowledge that I believe a disposition to exclude brevet officers in general from command has a great share in the opposition in every instance, and that so far it affects my case. But, at the same time, it appears to me this principle alone can never be productive of more than momentary murmurs, where it is not seconded by some plausible pretext. I also am convinced that the Pennsylvania officers, for their own sakes, repented the rash steps they had taken, and, on cool reflection, were happy in an opportunity to relinquish their menaces of quitting a service to which they were attached by habit, inclination, and interest, as well as by patriotism. I believe, too, we shall never have a similar instance in the army unless the practice should be carried to excess. Major Galvan, I am told, will probably be relieved. Colonel Gimat will be then the only brevet officer remaining in command. Your Excellency is the best judge of the proper limits, and there can be no doubt that the rights of particular officers ought to give place to the general good and tranquillity of the service.

I cannot forbear repeating that my case is pe-

culiar and dissimilar to all the former. It is distinguished by the circumstances I have before intimated: my early entrance into the service; my having made the campaign of '76, the most disagreeable of the war, at the head of a company of artillery, and having been entitled in that corps to a rank equal in degree, and more ancient in date, than I now possess; my having made all the subsequent campaigns in the family of the Commander-in-Chief, in a constant course of important and laborious service. These are my pretensions, at this advanced period of the war, to being employed in the only way which my situation admits; and I imagine they would have their weight in the minds of the officers in general. I only urge them a second time as reasons which will not suffer me to view the matter in the same light with your Excellency, or to regard as impracticable my appointment in a light corps, should there be one formed. I entreat that they may be understood in this sense only. I am incapable of wishing to obtain any object by importunity. I assure your Excellency that I am too well persuaded of your candor to attribute your refusal to any other cause than an apprehension of inconveniences that may attend the appointment.

P. S.—I have used the term brevet in the sense your Excellency appears to have understood it in, as signifying, in general, all officers not attached to any established corps. Congress seem, however, to have made a distinction: they only give a kind of warrant to those whom they designate as brevet officers. Mine is a regular commission.

TO MRS. HAMILTON

CAMP NEAR DOBBS FERRY, July 10, 1781.

The day before yesterday I arrived here, but for want of an opportunity could not write any sooner; indeed, I know of none now. Finding, when I came here, that nothing was said on the subject of a command, I wrote the General a letter, and inclosed him my commission. This morning Tilghman came to me in his name, pressed me to retain my commission, with an assurance that he would endeavor, by all means, to give me a command, nearly such as I could have desired in the present circumstances of the army. Though I know you would be happy to hear had I rejected this proposal, it is a pleasure my reputation would not permit me to afford you. I consented to retain my commission, and accept the command. I quarter, at present, by a very polite and warm invitation, with General Lincoln, and experience from the officers of both armies every mark of esteem. * * *

TO WASHINGTON

CAMP, August 7, 1781.

SIR:

The other day I applied to Colonel Tilghman for an order for shoes, for the two companies of levies. He thought, on a general principle, it could not be granted; but as from the best of my recollection, confirmed by inquiry of others, I have reason to believe a distinction was made last campaign in favor of the advanced corps, in the case of Cortland's

regiment, I am induced to submit the matter to your Excellency.

Your Excellency is sensible that the service of an advanced corps, must be in general more active than of the line; and that, in a country like this, the article of shoes is indispensable. If the men cannot be supplied, they cannot perform the duty required of them; which will make the service fall heavier upon that part of the corps which is not under the same disability, as well as render a considerable part of it of much less utility. I will not add any personal consideration to those which affect the service; though it certainly cannot be a matter of indifference to me.

The men, I am informed, have, in general, received a bounty of about thirty pounds each, which is spent. The State makes no provision for them; and the fact is, they cannot supply themselves: they must therefore be destitute, if they have not a continental supply.

The distinction last campaign was, if I am not mistaken, that shoes were an article of absolute necessity, and therefore to be allowed, though the articles of clothing were refused.

TO MRS. HAMILTON

August, 1781.

In my last letter I informed you that there was a greater prospect of activity now, than there had been heretofore. I did this to prepare your mind for an event which, I am sure, will give you pain. I

begged your father, at the same time, to intimate to you, by degrees, the probability of its taking place. I used this method to prevent a surprise, which might be too severe to you. A part of the army, my dear girl, is going to Virginia, and I must, of necessity, be separated at a much greater distance from my beloved wife. I cannot announce the fatal necessity, without feeling every thing that a fond husband can feel. I am unhappy; I am unhappy beyond expression. I am unhappy, because I am to be so remote from you; because I am to hear from you less frequently than I am accustomed to do. I am miserable, because I know you will be so; I am wretched at the idea of flying so far from you, without a single hour's interview, to tell you all my pains and all my love. But I cannot ask permission to visit you. It might be thought improper to leave my corps at such a time and upon such an occasion. I must go without seeing you—I must go without embracing you;—alas! I must go. But let no idea, other than of the distance we shall be asunder, disquiet you. Though I said the prospects of activity will be greater, I said it to give your expectations a different turn, and prepare you for something disagreeable. It is ten to one that our views will be disappointed, by Cornwallis retiring to South Carolina by land. At all events, our operations will be over by the latter end of October, and I will fly to my home. Don't mention I am going to Virginia.

TO MRS. HAMILTON

HEAD OF ELK, Sept. 6, 1781.

Yesterday, my lovely wife, I wrote to you, inclosing you a letter in one to your father, to the care of Mr. Morris. To-morrow the post sets out, and to-morrow we embark for Yorktown. I cannot refuse myself the pleasure of writing you a few lines. Constantly uppermost in my thoughts and affections, I am happy only when my moments are devoted to some office that respects you. I would give the world to be able to tell you all I feel and all I wish, but consult your own heart and you will know mine. What a world will soon be between us! To support the idea, all my fortitude is insufficient. What must be the case with you, who have the most female of female hearts? I sink at the perspective of your distress, and I look to heaven to be your guardian and supporter. Circumstances that have just come to my knowledge assure me that our operations will be expeditious, as well as our success certain. Early in November, as I promised you, we shall certainly meet. Cheer yourself with this idea, and with the assurance of never more being separated. Every day confirms me in the intention of renouncing public life and devoting myself wholly to you. Let others waste their time and their tranquillity in a vain pursuit of power and glory; be it my object to be happy in a quiet retreat with my better angel.

TO MRS. HAMILTON

September, 1781.

How chequered is human life! How precarious is happiness! How easily do we often part with it for a shadow! These are the reflections that frequently intrude themselves upon me with a painful application. I am going to do my duty. Our operations will be so conducted as to economize the lives of men. Exert your fortitude and rely upon heaven.[1]

TO LAFAYETTE

Camp before Yorktown, Oct. 15, 1781.

Sir:

I have the honor to render you an account of the corps under my command in your attack of last night upon the redoubt on the left of the enemy's lines.

Agreeably to your orders, we advanced in two columns with unloaded arms: the right, composed of Lieutenant-Colonel Gimat's battalion and my own, commanded by Major Fish; the left, of a detachment commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, destined to take the enemy in reverse, and intercept their retreat. The column on the right was preceded by a vanguard of twenty men, led by Lieutenant Mansfield, and a detachment of sappers and miners, commanded by Captain Gilliland, for the purpose of removing obstructions.

The redoubt was commanded by Major Campbell, with a detachment of British and German troops, and was completely in a state of defence.

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, ii., 260.

The rapidity and immediate success of the assault are the best comment on the behavior of the troops. Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens distinguished himself by an exact and vigorous execution of his part of the plan, by entering the enemy's works with his corps among the foremost, and making prisoner the commanding officer of the redoubt. Lieutenant-Colonel Gimat's battalion, which formed the van of the right attack, and which fell under my immediate observation, encouraged by the decisive and animated example of their leader, advanced with an ardor and resolution superior to every obstacle. They were well seconded by Major Fish, with the battalion under his command, who, when the front of the column reached the abatis, unlocking his corp to the left, as he had been directed, advanced with such celerity as to arrive in time to participate in the assault.

Lieutenant Mansfield deserves particular commendation for the coolness, firmness, and punctuality with which he conducted the vanguard. Captain Olney, who commanded the first platoon of Gimat's battalion, is entitled to peculiar applause. He led his platoon into the work with exemplary intrepidity, and received two bayonet wounds. Captain Gilliland, with the detachment of sappers and miners, acquitted themselves in a manner that did them great honor.

I do but justice to the several corps when I have the pleasure to assure you there was not an officer nor soldier whose behavior, if it could be particularized, would not have a claim to the warmest appro-

bation. As it would have been attended with delay and loss to wait for the removal of the abatis and palisades, the ardor of the troops was indulged in passing over them.

There was a happy coincidence of movements. The redoubt was in the same moment enveloped and carried in every part. The enemy are entitled to the acknowledgment of an honorable defence.

Permit me to have the satisfaction of expressing our obligations to Col. Armand, Capt. Legongne, the Chevalier De Fontevieux, and Capt. Bedkin, officers of his corps, who, acting upon this occasion as volunteers, proceeded at the head of the right column, and, entering the redoubt among the first, by their gallant example contributed to the success of the enterprise.

Our killed and wounded you will perceive by the enclosed return. I sensibly felt, at a critical period, the loss of the assistance of Lieutenant-Colonel Gimat, who received a musket ball in his foot, which obliged him to retire from the field. Captain Bets, of Laurens's corps, Captain Hunt and Lieutenant Mansfield, of Gimat's were wounded with the bayonet in gallantly entering the work. Captain Kirkpatrick, of the corps of sappers and miners, received a wound in the ditch.

Inclosed is a return of the prisoners. The killed and wounded of the enemy did not exceed eight. Incapable of imitating examples of barbarity, and, forgetting recent provocations, the soldiery spared every man who ceased to fight.

RETURN OF THE KILLED AND WOUNDED IN THE ADVANCED CORPS COMMANDED BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL HAMILTON, IN AN ATTACK ON THE ENEMY'S LEFT REDOUBT ON THE EVENING OF THE 14TH OCT., 1781.

	Lieut.-Cols.		Majors.		Capt's.		Sub-alterns		Ser-geants.		Rank and File.	
	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded.	Killed.	Wounded
Lt.-Col. Hamilton's battalion												4
Lt.-Col. Gimat's battalion		1				2			1	1	7	15
Lt.-Col. Laurens's detachment						1					1	5
Corps of Sappers and Miners						1						1
Total		1				4			1	1	8	25

TO MRS. HAMILTON

YORKTOWN, Oct. 16, 1781.

Two nights ago, my Eliza, my duty and my honor obliged me to take a step in which your happiness was too much risked. I commanded an attack upon one of the enemy's redoubts; we carried it in an instant, and with little loss. You will see the particulars in the Philadelphia papers. There will be, certainly, nothing more of this kind; all the rest will be by approach; and if there should be another occasion, it will not fall to my turn to execute it.[1]

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, ii., 275.

TO WASHINGTON

March 1, 1782.

SIR:

I need not observe to your Excellency that respect for the opinion of Congress will not permit me to be indifferent to the impressions they may receive of my conduct. On this principle, though I do not think the subject of the enclosed letter of sufficient importance to request an official communication of it, yet I should be happy it might in some way be known to the members of that honorable body. Should they hereafter learn that, though retained on the list of their officers, I am not in the execution of the duties of my station, I wish them to be sensible that it is not a diminution of zeal which induces me voluntarily to withdraw my services, but that I only refrain from intruding them when circumstances seem to have made them either not necessary or not desired; and that I shall not receive emoluments without performing the conditions to which they were annexed. I also wish them to be apprised upon what footing my future continuance in the army is placed, that they may judge how far it is expedient to permit it. I therefore take the liberty to request the favor of your Excellency to impart the knowledge of my situation in such manner as you think most convenient.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, March 1, 1782.

SIR.

Your Excellency will, I am persuaded, readily admit the force of this sentiment, that though it is

the duty of a good citizen to devote his services to the public when it has occasion for them, he cannot with propriety or delicacy to himself obtrude them when it either has, or appears to have none. The difficulties I experienced last campaign in obtaining a command will not suffer me to make any further application on that head.

As I have many reasons to consider my being employed hereafter in a precarious light, the bare possibility of rendering an equivalent will not justify to my scruples the receiving any future emoluments from my commission. I therefore renounce, from this time, all claim to the compensations attached to my military station during the war or afterwards. But I have motives which will not permit me to resolve on a total resignation. I sincerely hope a prosperous train of affairs may continue to make it no inconvenience to decline the services of persons whose zeal, in worse times, was found not altogether useless; but as the most promising appearances are often reversed by unforeseen disasters, and as unfortunate events may again make the same zeal of some value, I am unwilling to put it out of my power to renew my exertions in the common cause in the line in which I have hitherto acted.

I shall accordingly retain my rank while I am permitted to do it, and take this opportunity to declare that I shall be at all times ready to obey the call of the public in any capacity, civil or military (consistent with what I owe to myself), in which there may be a prospect of my contributing to the final

attainment of the object for which I embarked in the service.[1]

TO RICHARD K. MEADE [2]

PHILADELPHIA, March, 1782.

A half hour since brought me the pleasure of your letter of December last. It went to Albany and came from thence to this place. I heartily felicitate you on the birth of your daughter. I can well conceive your happiness on that occasion by that which I feel on a similar one. Indeed, the sensations of a tender father of the child of a beloved mother can only be conceived by those who have experienced them.

Your heart, my dear Meade, is peculiarly formed for enjoyments of this kind. You have every right to be a happy husband—a happy father. You have every prospect of being so. I hope your felicity may never be interrupted.

You cannot imagine how entirely domestic I am growing. I lose all taste for the pursuits of ambition. I sigh for nothing but the company of my wife and my baby. The ties of duty alone, or imagined duty, keep me from renouncing public life altogether. It is, however, probable I may not any longer be engaged in it. I have explained to you the difficulties which I met with in obtaining a

[1] This was inclosed in the preceding letter. *History of the Republic*, ii., 279.

[2] Col. Meade, of Virginia, was one of Washington's confidential and trusted aides-de-camp. He was a gallant soldier and an intimate friend of Hamilton.

command last campaign. I thought it incompatible with the delicacy due to myself to make any application this campaign. I have expressed this sentiment in a letter to the General, and, retaining my rank only, have relinquished the emoluments of my commission, declaring myself, notwithstanding, ready at all times to obey the calls of the public. I don't expect to hear any of these, unless the state of our affairs should change for the worse, and, lest by any unforeseen accident that would happen, I choose to keep myself in a situation again to contribute my aid. This prevents a total resignation.

You were right in supposing I neglected to prepare what I promised you at Philadelphia. The truth is I was in such a hurry to get home that I could think of nothing else. As I set out to-morrow morning for Albany, I cannot from this place send you the matter you wish.

Imagine, my dear Meade, what pleasure it *must* give Eliza and myself to know that Mrs. Meade interests herself in us. Without a personal acquaintance, we have been long attached to her. My visit at Mr. Fitzhugh's confirmed my partiality. Betsy is so fond of your family that she proposes to form a match between her boy and your girl, provided you will engage to make the latter as amiable as her mother.

Truly, my dear Meade, I often regret that fortune has cast our residence at such a distance from each other. It would be a serious addition to my happiness if we lived where I could see you every day, but fate has determined it otherwise. I am a little hur-

ried, and can only request, in addition, that you will present me most affectionately to Mrs. Meade, and believe me to be, etc.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, May 18, 1782.

SIR:

I had this day the honor of receiving your letter of the 2d instant, and am much obliged by the mark of your confidence which it contains, and to Col. Stewart for his friendly intentions upon the occasion.

My military situation has indeed become so negative, that I have no motive to continue in it; and if my services could be of importance to the public in a civil line, I should cheerfully obey its command. But the plan which I have marked out to myself is the profession of the law, and I am now engaged in a course of studies for that purpose. Time is so precious to me that I could not put myself in the way of any interruptions, unless for an object of consequence to the public or to myself. The present is not of this nature. Such are the circumstances of this State, the benefit arising from the office you propose would not, during the war, exceed yearly one hundred pounds; for, unfortunately, I am persuaded it will not pay annually into the Continental treasury above forty thousand pounds; and, on a peace establishment, this will not be for some time to come much more than doubled. You will perceive, sir, that an engagement of this kind does not

correspond with my views, and does not afford a sufficient inducement to relinquish them.

I am not the less sensible of the obliging motives which dictated the offer, and it will be an additional one to that respect and esteem with which I have the honor to be, etc.

TO GENERAL KNOX

ALBANY, June 7, 1782.

DEAR GENERAL:

We are told here that there is a British officer coming on from Cornwallis' army to be executed by way of retaliation for the murder of Capt. Huddy. As this appears to me clearly to be an ill-timed proceeding, and if persisted in will be derogatory to the national character, I cannot forbear communicating to you my ideas upon the subject. A sacrifice of this sort is entirely repugnant to the genius of the age we live in, and is without example in modern history, nor can it fail to be considered in Europe as wanton and unnecessary. It appears that the enemy (from necessity, I grant, but the operation is the same) have changed their system and adopted a more humane one; and, therefore, the only justifying motive of retaliation—the preventing a repetition of cruelty—ceases. But if this were not the case, so solemn and deliberate a sacrifice of the innocent for the guilty must be condemned on the present received notions of humanity, and encourage an opinion that we are, in a certain degree, in a state of barbarism. Our affairs are now in a prosperous train,

and so vigorous—I would rather say so violent—a measure would want the plea of necessity. It would argue meanness in us that at this late stage of the war, in the midst of success, we should suddenly depart from that temper with which we have all along borne with a great and more frequent provocation. The death of André could not have been dispensed with, but it must still be viewed at a distance as an act of *rigid justice*. If we wreak our resentment on an innocent person, it will be suspected that we are too fond of executions. I am persuaded it will have an influence peculiarly unfavorable to the General's character.

If it is seriously believed that in this advanced stage of affairs retaliation is necessary, let another mode be chosen. Let under actors be employed, and let the authority by which it is done be wrapt in obscurity and doubt. Let us endeavor to make it fall upon those who have had a direct or indirect share in the guilt. Let not the Commander-in-Chief—considered as the first and most respectable character among us—come forward in person and be the avowed author of an act at which every humane feeling revolts. Let us at least have as much address as the enemy; and, if we must have victims, appoint some obscure agents to perform the ceremony and bear the odium which must always attend even justice itself when directed by extreme severity.

For my own part, my dear sir, I think a business of this complexion entirely out of season. The time for it, if there ever was one, is past.

But it is said that the Commander-in-Chief has

pledged himself for it and cannot recede. Inconsistency in this case would be better than consistency. But pretexts may be found and will be readily admitted in favor of humanity. Carleton will in all probability do something like apology and concession. He will give appearances of preventing everything of the kind in future. Let the General appear to be satisfied with these appearances. The steps Carleton is said to have taken to suppress the refugee incursions will give the better color to lenity.

I address myself to you upon this occasion, because I know your liberality and your influence with the General. If you are of my opinion, I am sure you will employ it, if it should not be too late. I would not think a letter necessary, but I know how apt men are to be actuated by the circumstances which immediately surround them, and to be led into an approbation of measures which, in another situation, they would disapprove. Mrs. Hamilton joins me in compliments to Mrs. Knox.[1]

[1] This letter is printed from the original in the possession of the New England Historical Genealogical Society [Knox MSS., vol. viii., pp. 170–172]. It has already been printed in the *History of the Republic*, ii., 284. The affair to which it refers was the murder of Captain Huddy, an American officer, by a party of refugees under the command of Captain Lippincott. The anger excited by this brutal outrage was intense, and Washington was so strongly moved, that he demanded from Sir Guy Carleton the surrender of Lippincott. This being refused, he ordered a British officer to be selected from among the prisoners and held in close confinement preparatory to execution if Sir Guy Carleton would not yield. The lot fell upon Captain Asgill, an officer of the Guards and a boy of nineteen. Captain Asgill was finally released, as Washington could not bring himself to this act of retaliation, even as a last extremity, and the real culprit escaped. It was while Asgill was in prison with death hanging over him that Hamilton wrote this letter.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, June 17, 1782.

SIR:

The letter which you did me the honor to write me, of the 4th instant, came to my hands too late to permit me to answer it by the return of the same post. The explanation you give of your intention in your late offer makes it an object that will fully compensate for the time it will deduct from my other occupations. In accepting it, I have only one scruple, arising from a doubt whether the service I can render in the present state of things will be an equivalent for the compensation. The whole system (if it may be so called) of taxation in this State is radically vicious, burthensome to the people, and unproductive to government. As the matter now stands, there seems to be little for a continental receiver to do. The whole business appears to be thrown into the hands of the county treasurers, nor do I find that there is any appropriation made of any part of the taxes collected to continental purposes, or any provision to authorize payment to the officer you appoint; this, however, must be made. There is only one way in which I can imagine a prospect of being materially useful—that is, in seconding your application to the State. In popular assemblies much may sometimes be brought about by personal discussions, by entering into details and combating objections as they rise. If it should at any time be thought advisable by you to empower me to act in this capacity, I shall be happy to do every thing that depends on me to effectuate your views. I flatter myself to you,

sir, I need not profess that I suggest this, not from a desire to augment the importance of office, but to advance the public interest.

It is of primary moment to me as soon as possible to take my station in the law, and on this consideration I am pressing to qualify myself for admission to next term, which will be the latter end of July. After this, if you think an interview with me necessary I will wait upon you in Philadelphia. In the meantime I shall be happy to receive your instructions, and shall direct my attention more particularly to acquiring whatever information may be useful to my future operations. I have read your publications at different times, but as I have not the papers containing them in my possession, it will be necessary that their contents should be comprised in your instructions. A meeting of the Legislature is summoned early in the next month, at which, if I previously receive your orders, it may be possible to put matters in train.

I am truly indebted to you, sir, for the disposition you have manifested upon this occasion; and I shall only add an assurance of my endeavors to justify your confidence and prove to you the sincerity of that respectful attachment with which

I am, sir, etc.

TO COMFORT SANDS [1]

ALBANY, June 23, 1782.

SIR:

Mr. Morris having lately offered me the appointment of Receiver of Continental Taxes for this State, I wish to collect as much and as accurate information as possible of the situation of its money concerns. It will be, among other things, of great importance that I should form an idea of the money brought into the State and carried out of it; and, with a view to this, I take the liberty to request you will furnish me with an estimate of what you have reason to think you will lay out in this State in the course of a year in the transactions of your contract business. Mr. Duer has been so obliging as to promise me a sketch of his disbursements in this quarter, and has informed me that you are principally charged with what relates to the supplies of the main army as well as West Point, and will therefore be best able to enlighten me on that head. The calculation may not admit of absolute precision; but if it comes near the truth it will answer. It would be useful that you could distinguish, as nearly as possible, what part will be in specie, what in bank and other notes. As this is a matter that can be attended with no inconvenience to any person, and will be conducive to the public utility, I flatter myself you will favor me with a speedy communication.

[1] A merchant and army contractor of New York.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, July 13, 1782.

SIR:

I have this moment received your letter of the second inst., and as the post will set out on its return in half an hour, I have little more than time to acknowledge the receipt of it.

I shall to-morrow morning commence a journey to Poughkeepsie, where the Legislature are assembled, and I will endeavor by every step in my power to second your views, though, I am sorry to add, without very sanguine expectations. I think it probable the Legislature will do something, but whatever momentary effort they may make, till the entire change of their present system very little will be done. To effect this, mountains of prejudice and particular interest are to be levelled. For my own part, considering the late serious misfortune of our ally, the spirit of reformation, of wisdom, and of unanimity, which seems to have succeeded to that of blunder, perverseness, and dissension in the British Government, and the universal reluctance of these States to do what is right, I cannot help viewing our situation as critical, and I feel it the duty of every citizen to exert his faculties to the utmost to support the measures, especially those solid arrangements of finance on which our safety depends.

I will by the next post forward you the bond executed with proper sureties.

It is not in the spirit of compliment, but of sincerity, I assure you, that the opinion I entertain of him who presides in the department was not one of

the smallest motives to my acceptance of the office; nor will that esteem and confidence which makes me now sensibly feel the obliging expressions of your letter fail to have a great share in influencing my future exertions.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

POUGHKEEPSIE, July 16, 1782.

SIR:

I have the honor to inclose your Excellency the copy of a warrant from the Honorable Robert Morris, Esq., Superintendent of the Finances of the United States, by which you will perceive that, agreeable to the resolution of Congress, of the 2d of November last, he has appointed me Receiver of the Continental Taxes of the State. I am therefore to request that the Legislature will be pleased to vest in me the authority required by that resolution.

It is a part of my duty to explain to the Legislature, from time to time, the views of the Superintendent of Finance, in pursuance of the orders of Congress, that they may be the better enabled to judge of the measures most proper to be adopted for an effectual co-operation. For this purpose I pray your Excellency to impart my request, that I may have the honor of a conference with a committee of the two Houses, at such time and place as they may find convenient.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

POUGHKEEPSIE, July 22, 1782.

SIR:

Agreeably to my letter to you from Albany, I came to this place and had an interview with a committee of the Legislature, in which I urged the several matters contained in your instructions. I strongly represented the necessity of solid arrangements of finance, and, by way of argument, pointed out all the defects of the present system. I found every man convinced that something was wrong, but few that were willing to recognize the mischief when defined, and consent to the proper remedy. The quantum of taxes already imposed is so great as to make it useless to impose any others to a considerable amount. A bill has, however, passed both Houses, payable in specie, bank notes, or your notes, for eighteen thousand pounds. It is at present appropriated to your order, but I doubt whether some subsequent arrangement will not take place for a different appropriation. The Commander-in-Chief has applied for a quantity of forage, which the Legislature is devising the means of furnishing, and I fear it will finish by diverting the eighteen thousand pounds to that purpose. I have hitherto been able to prevent this, but as it is of indispensable importance to me to leave this place immediately to prepare for my examination, for which I have pledged myself the ensuing term, which is at hand, it is possible, after I have left it, that contrary ideas will prevail. Efforts have been made to introduce a species of negotiable certificates, which I have strenuously op-

posed. It has not yet taken place, but I am not clear how the matter will terminate.

Should the bill for the eighteen thousand pounds go out in its present form, I cannot hope that it will produce in the treasury above half the sum, such are the vices of our present mode of collection.

A bill has also passed the Assembly for collecting arrearages of taxes, payable in specie, bank notes, your notes, old continental emissions at one hundred and twenty-eight for one, and a species of certificates issued by the State for the purchase of horses. This is now before the Senate. The arrearages are very large.

Both Houses have unanimously passed a set of resolutions, to be transmitted to Congress and the several States, proposing a convention of the States, to enlarge the powers of Congress and vest them with funds. I think this a very eligible step, though I doubt of the concurrence of the other States; but I am certain without it they will never be brought to co-operate in any reasonable or effectual plan. Urge reforms or exertions, and the answer constantly is: What avails it for one State to make them without the concert of the others? It is in vain to expose the futility of this reasoning; it is founded in all those passions which have the strongest influence on the human mind.

The Legislature have also appointed, at my instance, a committee to devise, in its recess, a more effectual system of taxation, and to communicate with me on this subject. A good deal will depend on the success of this attempt. Convinced of the absurdity of multiplying taxes in the present mode,

where, in effect, the payment is voluntary, and the money received exhausted in the collection, I have labored chiefly to instil the necessity of a change in the plan, and, though not so rapidly as the exigency of public affairs requires, truth seems to be making some progress.

There is other appropriation to the use of Congress than of the eighteen thousand pounds.

I shall, as soon as possible, give you a full and just view of the situation and temper of this State. This cannot be till after my intended examination; that over, I shall lay myself out in every way that can promote your views and the public good.

I am informed you have an appointment to make of a Commissioner of Accounts for this State. Permit me to suggest the expediency of choosing a citizen of the State; a man who, to the qualifications requisite for the execution of the office, adds an influence in its affairs. I need not particularize the reasons of this suggestion. In my next I will also take the liberty to mention some characters.

I omitted mentioning that the two Houses have also passed a bill, authorizing Congress to adjust the quotas of the States on equitable principles, agreeably to your recommendation. I enclose you the bond executed jointly with General Schuyler.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

ALBANY, August 3, 1782.

SIR:

I have lately received a letter from the Superintendent of Finance, inclosing a copy of a circu-

lar-letter from him to the several States, dated twenty-fifth July, '81, in which he requests information on the following important points.

"What supplies, of every kind, money, provisions, forage, transportation, etc., have been furnished by this State to the United States, since the eighteenth of March, 1780."

"The amount of the money in the treasury; the sums expected to be there; the times they will probably be brought in; the appropriations."

"The amount of the different paper currencies in the State; the probable increase, or decrease, of each; and the respective rates of depreciation."

"The Acts passed since the eighteenth of March, 1780, for raising taxes, furnishing supplies, etc.; the manner they have been executed; the time necessary for them to operate; the consequences of their operation; the policy of the State relative to laying, assessing, levying, and collecting taxes."

In his letter, which is *circular*, to the Receivers, he says the answers he has received to these inquiries are few and short of the object; and he therefore urges me to take the most speedy and effectual means in my power, to enable him to form a proper judgment on such of the subjects referred to as the actual state of things renders it important to know.

In compliance with this, I request the favor of your Excellency to inform me what steps have been taken on the several heads of which the above is an abstract; and what progress has been made in the business; particularly with respect to the first article. I shall also be much obliged to you to direct

Mr. Holt to furnish me, without delay, with the Acts mentioned in the inclosed list.

Your Excellency must have been too sensible of the necessity of enabling the Director of the Finances of the United States to form a just judgment of the true state of our affairs, to have omitted any measure in your power to procure the fullest information on the several matters submitted to you: and I am persuaded the business is in such a train that little will be left for me to do.

I entreat you will do me the honor to let me hear from you as soon as possible on the subject.

It would promote the public business, if you would be so good as to direct Mr. Banker to supply me with such information as I might call upon him for. He is very obliging, but without some authority for the purpose, there is a delicacy in calling upon him. I wrote at the same time to Mr. Holt, printer for the State, desiring him to forward me the copies of the Acts above mentioned; and telling him that if the Governor did not make satisfaction, I would do it. These Acts were all those relative to finance and supply, from March 18, 1780, to this time.

TO THE COUNTY TREASURERS

ALBANY, August 5, 1782.

SIR:

It will be of great utility to the State, and essential to the execution of my instructions from the Superintendent of Finance, that I should be able to ascertain, as speedily as possible, the expense attending

the collection of taxes within this State. In order to this, I shall be much obliged to you to send me without delay an account of what you have received in your county, since the beginning of the year '80 to this time, as well for the taxes laid for county purposes, as for those imposed by the Legislature; and of the expenses of every kind attending the collection; those of the supervisors, assessors, the allowance to the collectors and to myself.

When I assure you I want this information for an important purpose, I doubt not you will forward it to me as speedily as it can be prepared, and with as much accuracy as circumstances will permit; by doing which you will serve the public and oblige, sir, etc.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, August 13, 1782.

SIR:

I promised you in former letters to give you a full view of the situation and temper of this State. I now sit down to execute that task.

You have already in your possession a pretty just picture of the State, drawn by the Legislature, perhaps too highly colored in some places, but just, and, in the main, true.

It is the opinion of the most sensible men with whom I converse, who are best acquainted with the circumstances of the State, and who are least disposed to exaggerate its distress as an excuse for inactivity, that its faculties for revenue are diminished at least two thirds.

It will not be difficult to conceive this when we consider that five out of the fourteen counties of which the State is composed, including the capital, are in the hands of the enemy; that two and part of a third have revolted; two others have been desolated the greater part by the ravages of the enemy and of our own troops, and the remaining four have more or less suffered partial injuries from the same causes. Adding the fragments of some to repair the losses of others, the efficient property, strength, and force of the State will consist in little more than four counties.

In the distribution of taxes before the war, the city of New York used to be rated at one third of the whole; but this was too high, owing probably to the prevailing of the country influence. Its proper proportion I should judge to have been about one fourth, which serves further to illustrate the probable decrease of the State.

Our population, indeed, is not diminished in the same degree, as many of the inhabitants of the dismembered and ruined counties, who have left their habitations, are dispersed through those which remain; and it would seem that the labor of the additional hands ought to ensure the culture and value of these. But there are many deductions to be made from this apparent advantage: the numbers that have *recruited* the British army; those that have been furnished to ours; the emigrations to Vermont and to the neighboring States, less harassed by the war, and affording better encouragements to industry, both which have been considerable.

Besides these circumstances, many of the fugitive families are a burthen for their substance upon the State. The fact is, labor is much dearer than before the war.

This State has certainly made, in the course of the war, great exertions, and, upon many occasions, of the most exhausting kind. This has sometimes happened from want of judgment; at others, from necessity. When the army, as has too often been the case, has been threatened with some fatal calamity—for want of provisions, forage, the means of transportation, etc.,—in consequence of pressing applications from the Commander-in-Chief, the Legislature have been obliged to have recourse to extraordinary expedients to answer the pressing emergency, which have both distressed and disgusted the people. There is no doubt that, with a prudent and systematic administration, the State might have rendered more benefit to the common cause, with less inconvenience to itself, than by all its forced efforts; but there, as everywhere else, we have wanted experience and knowledge. And, indeed, had this not been the case, every thing everywhere has been so radically wrong, that it was difficult, if not impossible, for any one State to be right.

The exposed situation of the frontier, and the frequent calls upon the inhabitants for personal service on each extremity, by interfering with industry, have contributed to impoverish the State and fatigue the people.

Deprived of foreign trade, our internal traffic is carried on upon the most disadvantageous terms.

It divides itself into three branches: with the city of New York, with Jersey and Pennsylvania, and with New England.

That with New York consists chiefly of luxuries on one part and returns of specie on the other. I imagine we have taken goods from that place to the amount of near £30,000. The Legislature passed a severe law to prevent this intercourse, but what will laws avail against the ingenuity and intrepidity of avarice?

From Jersey and Pennsylvania we take about £30,000 more, and we pay almost entirely in cash.

From Massachusetts and other parts of New England we purchase to the amount of about £50,000, principally in tea and salt. (The articles of tea and salt alone cost this State the annual sum of £60,000.) We sell to these States to the value of about £30,000.

The immense land transportation, of which the chief part is carried on by the subjects of other States, is a vast incumbrance upon our trade.

The principal article we have to throw in the opposite scale is the expenditures of the army. Mr. Sands informs me that the contractors for the main army and West Point lay out in this State at the rate of about $60,000 a year; Mr. Duer, for these northern posts, about $30,000. If the Quartermaster-General expends as much more in his department, the whole will amount to about $180,000. I speak of what is paid for in specie, or such paper as answers the purpose of specie. These calculations cannot absolutely be relied on, because the data are necessarily uncertain, but they are the result of the

best information I can obtain, and, if near the truth, prove that the general balance of trade is against us—a plain symptom of which is *an extreme* and *universal* scarcity of money.

The situation of the State with respect to its internal government is not more pleasing. Here we find the general disease which infects all our constitutions—an excess of popularity. There is no *order* that has a will of its own. The inquiry constantly is what will *please*, not what will *benefit* the people. In such a government there can be nothing but temporary expenditure, fickleness, and folly.

But the point of view in which this subject will be interesting to you is that which relates to our finances. I gave you, in a former letter, a sketch of our plan of taxation, but I will now be more particular.

The general principle of it is apparent, according to *circumstances and abilities collectively considered.* The ostensible reason for adopting this vague basis was a desire of equality. It was pretended that this could not be obtained so well by any fixed tariff of taxable property, as by leaving it to the discretion of persons chosen by the people themselves to determine the ability of each citizen. But perhaps the true reason was a desire to discriminate between the *Whigs* and *Tories*. This chimerical attempt at perfect equality has resulted in total inequality, or rather this narrow disposition to overburthen a particular class of citizens (living under the protection of the government) has been retorted upon the contrivers or their friends, wherever that class has been numerous enough to preponderate in the election of

the officers who were to execute the law. The exterior figure a man makes, the decency and meanness of his manner of living, the personal friendships or dislikes of the assessors, have much more share in determining what individuals shall pay, than the proportion of property.

The Legislature first *assesses* or quotas the several counties. Here the evil begins—the members cabal and intrigue to throw the *burthen* off their respective constituents. Address and influence, more than considerations of real ability, prevail. A great deal of time is lost, and a great deal of expense incurred, before the juggle is ended and the necessary compromise made.

The supervisors, of whom there are upon an average sixteen in each county, meet at the notification of the county clerk, and assign their proportions to the subdivisions of the county, and, in the distribution, play over the same game which was played in the Legislature.

The assessors, assembled on a like notification, according to their fancies, determine the proportion of each individual; a list of which being made out and signed by the supervisors, is a warrant to the collectors. There are near an hundred upon an average in each country. The allowance to these officers has been various. It is now six shillings a day, besides expenses. In some cases they have been limited to a particular time for executing the business; but, in general, it is left to their discretion, and the greater part of them are not in a hurry to complete it, as they have a conpensation for their trouble and

live better at the public charge than they are accustomed to do at their own. The consequence is not only delay but a heavy expense.

It now remains for the collectors to collect the tax, and it is the duty of the supervisors to see that they do it. Both these offices are elective as well as that of the assessor; and, of course, there is little disposition to risk the displeasure of those who elect. They have no motive of interest to stimulate them to their duty equivalent to the inconvenience of performing it. The collector is entitled to the trifling compensation of sometimes four, sometimes six pence, out of each pound he collects, and is liable to the trifling penalty of twenty or twenty-five pounds for neglect of duty. The supervisors have no interest at all in the collections, and it will not on this account appear extraordinary, that, with continual delinquencies in the collection, there has never been a single prosecution. As I observed on a former occasion, if the collector happens to be a zealous man and lives in a zealous neighborhood, the taxes are collected; if either of these requisites are wanting, the collection languishes or entirely fails.

When the taxes are collected they are paid to the county treasurer, an officer chosen by the supervisors. The collectors are responsible to him also; but as he is allowed only one fourth or one half per cent., he has no sufficient inducement to incur the odium of compelling them to do their duty.

The county treasurer pays what he receives in to the State treasurer, who has an annual salary of £300, and has nothing to do but to receive and pay

out according to the appropriation of the Legislature.

Notwithstanding the obvious defects of this system; notwithstanding experience has shown it to be iniquitous and inefficient, and that all attempts to amend it without totally changing it are fruitless; notwithstanding there is a pretty general discontent from the inequality of the taxes, still ancient habits, ignorance, the spirit of the times, the opportunity afforded to some popular characters of *screening* themselves by intriguing with the assessors, have hitherto proved an overmatch for common sense and common justice, as well as the manifest advantage of the State and of the United States.

The temper of the State, which I shall now describe, may be considered under two heads—that of the rulers and that of the people.

The rulers are generally zealous in the common cause, though their zeal is oftentimes misdirected. They are jealous of their own power; but yet, as this State is the immediate theatre of the war, these apprehensions of danger, and an opinion that they are obliged to do more than their neighbors, make them very willing to part with power in favor of the Federal Government. This last opinion and an idea added to it, that they have no credit for their past exertions, has put them out of humor and indisposed many of them for future exertions. I have heard several assert that in the present situation of this State, nothing more ought to be expected than that it maintain its own government and keep up its quota of troops.

This sentiment, however, is as yet confined to few, but it is too palpable not to make proselytes.

The rulers of this State are attached to the alliance, as are Whigs generally. They have also great confidence in you personally, but pretty general exception has been taken to a certain letter of yours written, I believe, in the winter or spring. The idea imbibed is that it contains a reflection upon them for their past exertions. I have on every account combated this impression, which could not fail to have an ill effect, and I mention it to you with freedom, because it is essential you should know the temper of the States respecting yourself.

As to the people, in the early periods of the war, near one half of them were avowedly more attached to Great Britain than to their liberty, but the energy of the government has subdued all opposition. The State by different means has been purged of a large part of its malcontents; but there still remains, I dare say, a third, whose secret wishes are on the side of the enemy; the remainder sigh for peace, murmur at taxes, clamor at their rulers, change one incapable man for another more incapable, and, I fear, if left to themselves, would, too many of them, be willing to purchase peace at any price—not from inclination to Great Britain or disaffection to independence, but from mere supineness and avarice.

† The speculation of evils from the claims of Great Britain gives way to the pressure of inconveniences actually felt, and we required the event which has lately happened—the recognition of our independ-

† See page 280.

ence by the Dutch—to give a new spring to the public hopes and the public passions. This has had a good effect, and if the Legislature can be brought to adopt a wise plan for its finances, we may put the people in better humor, and give a more regular and durable movement to the machine. The people of this State, as far as my observation goes, have as much firmness in their make and as much submission to government as those of any part of the Union. It remains for me to give you an explicit opinion of what is practicable for this State to do.

Even with a judicious plan of taxation I do not think the State can afford, or the people will bear, to pay more than £70,000 or £80,000 a year. In its entire and flourishing state, according to my mode of calculation it could not have exceeded £230,000 or £240,000; and reduced as it is, with the wheels of circulation so exceedingly clogged for want of commerce and a sufficient medium, more than I have said cannot be expected. Past experience will not authorize a more flattering conclusion. Out of this is to be deducted the expense of the interior administration and the money necessaries for the levies of men. The first amounts to about £15,000, as you will perceive by the inclosed slate; but I suppose the Legislature would choose to retain £20,000. The money hitherto yearly expended in recruits has amounted to between £20,000 and £30,000; but on a proper plan £10,000 might suffice. There would then remain £40,000 for your department.

But this is on a supposition of a change of system; for with the present I doubt there being paid into

the Continental treasury one third of that sum. I am endeavoring to collect materials for greater certainty upon this subject. But the business of supplies has been so diversified, lodged in such a variety of independent hands, and so carelessly transacted, that it is hardly possible to get any tolerable idea of the gross and net product.

With the help of these materials I shall strive to convince the committee, when they meet, that a change of measures is essential; if they enter cordially into right views, we may succeed; but I confess I fear more than I hope.

I have taken every step in my power to procure the information you have desired in your letter of July 18th. The most material part of it, an account of the supplies furnished since March, '80, has been committed to Col. Hay. I have written to him in pressing terms to *accelerate* the preparation.

You will perceive, sir, I have neither flattered the State nor encouraged high expectations. I thought it my duty to exhibit things as they are, not as they ought to be. I shall be sorry to give you an ill opinion of the State for want of equal candor in the representations of others; for, however disagreeable the reflection, I have too much reason to believe that the true picture of other States would be, in proportion to their circumstances, equally unpromising. All my inquiries and all that appears induce this opinion. I intend this letter in *confidence* to yourself, and therefore I endorse it *private*.

Before I conclude I will say a word on a point that possibly you could wish to be informed about. The

contract up this way is executed generally to the satisfaction of the officers and soldiers, which is more meritorious in the contractor, as in all *probability* it will be to him a losing undertaking.[1]

TO JOHN LAURENS [2]

August 15, 1782.

I received with great pleasure, my dear Laurens, the letter which you wrote me in —— last. Your wishes in one respect are gratified. This State has pretty unanimously elected me to Congress. My time of service commences in November. It is not probable it will result in what you mention. I hope it is too late. We have great reason to flatter ourselves. Peace on our own terms is upon the carpet. The making it is in good hands. It is said your father is exchanged for Cornwallis, and gone to Paris to meet the other commissioners, and that Granville, on the part of England, has made a second trip there; in the last instance, vested with plenipotentiary powers.

I fear there may be obstacles, but I hope they may be surmounted.

Peace made, my dear friend, a new scene opens. The object then will be to make our independence a blessing. To do this we must secure our Union on

[1] This long and interesting letter is now first printed entire from the Hamilton papers in the State Department. A small portion beginning at the sentence, "The speculation of evils," marked thus †, [page 277] and continuing to the end, has been printed in the edition of 1850, vol. i., 295.

[2] In those days of slow mails, this letter probably never reached Laurens, who fell near the Combahee in a skirmish Aug. 27th

solid foundations—a herculean task,—and to effect which, mountains of prejudice must be levelled! It requires all the virtue and all the abilities of the country. Quit your sword, my friend; put on the toga. Come to Congress. We know each other's sentiments; our views are the same. We have fought side by side to make America free; let us hand in hand struggle to make her happy. Remember me to General Greene with all the warmth of sincere attachment. Yours forever.[1]

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

ALBANY, August 25, 1782.

SIR:

By advices from Philadelphia, I find that the present is a period rather critical on the subject of money, and concentres a variety of demands which it is not easy to satisfy.

It becomes, therefore, of importance to the Financier to avail himself of every immediate resource.

This induces me to request you will be so good as to inform me whether there is any near prospect of obtaining the loan directed to be applied to Continental use; also, whether any measures can be taken to accelerate the collection of the late tax imposed for the same use.

I would willingly write to the county treasurers myself, but, unauthorized as I am, I could expect no good effect from it.[2]

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, ii., 300.

[2] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, August 25, 1782.

SIR:

This letter serves only to transmit the two last papers. I wish the measures I have taken to satisfy you on the points you desire to be informed of had been attended to with so much success as to enable me now to transmit the result. But I find a singular confusion in the accounts kept by the public officers from whom I must necessarily derive my information, and a singular dilatoriness in complying with my application, partly from indolence and partly from jealousy of the office. I hope, by the next post, to transmit you information on some particulars.

TO COLONEL RICHARD K. MEADE

ALBANY, August 27, 1782.

I thank you, my dear Meade, for your letter of the first of this month, which you will perceive has travelled much faster than has been usual with our letters. Our correspondence hitherto has been unfortunate; nor, in fact, can either of us compliment himself on his punctuality, but you were right in concluding that, however indolence or accident may interrupt our intercourse, nothing will interrupt our friendship. Mine for you is built on a solid basis of a full conviction that you deserve it, and that it is reciprocal; and it is the more firmly fixed because you have few competitors. Experience is a continual comment on the worthlessness of the human

race; and the few exceptions we find have the greater right to be valued in proportion as they are rare. I know few men estimable, fewer amiable; and when I meet with one of the last description, it is not in my power to withhold my affection.

[You reproach me with not having said enough about our little stranger. When I wrote last I was not sufficiently acquainted with him to give you his character. I may now assure you that your daughter, when she sees him, will not consult you about the choice, or will only do it in respect to the rules of decorum. He is truly a very fine young gentleman, the most agreeable in his conversation and manners of any I ever knew, nor less remarkable for his intelligence and sweetness of temper. You are not to imagine, by my beginning with his mental qualifications, that he is defective in personal. It is agreed on all hands that he is handsome; his features are good, his eye is not only sprightly and expressive, but full of benignity. His attitude in sitting, is, by connoisseurs, esteemed graceful, and he has a method of waving his hand that announces the future orator. He stands, however, rather awkwardly, and as his legs have not all the delicate slimness of his father's, it is feared he may never excel as much in dancing, which is probably the only accomplishment in which he will not be a model. If he has any fault in manners, he laughs too much. He has now passed his seventh month. I am glad to find your prospect of being settled approaches. I am sure you will realize all the happiness you promise yourself with your amiable partner. I wish

fortune had not cast our lots at such a distance. Mrs. Meade, you, Betsey, and myself would make a most affectionate and most happy *partie quarré*.]

As to myself, I shall sit down in New York when it opens; and this period, we are told, approaches. No man looks forward to a peace with more pleasure than I do; though no man would sacrifice less to it than myself if I were not convinced that the people sigh for peace.

I have been studying the law for some months, and have lately been licensed as an attorney. I wish to prepare myself by October for examination as a counsellor; but some public avocation may possibly prevent me.

I had almost forgotten to tell you that I have been pretty unanimously elected, by the Legislature of this State, a member of Congress, to begin to serve in November. I do not hope to reform the State, although I shall endeavor to do all the good I can.

[Suffer Betsey and me to present our love to Mrs. Meade. She has a sisterly affection for you. My respects, if you please, to Mr. and Mrs. Fitzhugh. God bless you.] [1]

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, August 31, 1782.

SIR:

I send you herewith all the acts of the Legislature of this State since the government has been organ-

[1] This letter was partly printed in the edition of 1850. It is now completed from the *History of the Republic*, ii., 305. The added portions are inclosed in brackets.

ized; on the margin of which I have numbered all the acts relative to the matters you mention in your letter of July, '81, to the States agreeable to the within list. I inclose you the papers of the last week.

The indolence of some and the repugnancy of others make every trifle lag so much in the execution, that I am not able at this time to give you any further information. I wish to hear from you on the subject of my former letters previous to the meeting of the committee—the 15th of the ensuing month.

TO THE COUNTY TREASURERS

ALBANY, Sept. 7, 1782.

SIR:

The fifteenth of this month is the period fixed for the payment of the tax imposed at the last meeting of the Legislature for the use of the United States. The public exigencies and the reputation of the State require that every exertion should be made to collect this tax with punctuality and dispatch; and it is therefore my duty to urge you that you employ the powers vested in you, and all your personal influence, to induce the collectors to expedite the collection with all the zeal and vigor in their power. While the other States are all doing something, as a citizen of this, I shall feel a sensible mortification in being obliged to continue publishing to the others, that this State pays nothing in support of the war, as I have been under the necessity of doing the last

two months. Besides this, and other still more weighty considerations, a regard to the subjects of the State itself demands every exertion in our power. They have parted with their property on the public faith, and it is impossible for the public to fulfil its engagements to individuals, unless it is enabled to do it by the equal and just contributions of the community at large.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, Sept. 7, 1782.

SIR:

I have had the inclosed ready for some time; but in hopes of receiving the returns of the certificates mentioned in memorandum B, I delayed sending the present sketch. Having even received no answers from some of the parties who live at a distance from me, I suspect they have done their business in so disorderly a manner (to say nothing worse of it) that they are at a loss how to render the accounts; and I have therefore concluded not to detain any longer what I have procured.

I do not take the step mentioned in memorandum A, because I doubted its propriety. It might raise expectations about the old money, which, possibly, it may not enter into your plans to raise; and, besides this, by knowing what has been called in, in each State (which, from the sketch I send you, will appear as to this), you can determine the balance of omissions remaining out, except what may have worn out and been accidentally destroyed. If you

desire this step to be taken, I will obey your commands.

I have said nothing of the rates of depreciation, because I imagine your letter, written in July, '81, had reference to the rates at which the money was then actually circulating, and the circulation has now totally ceased. The laws I sent you by the last post will inform you of the rates fixed at different periods by the Legislature: forty, seventy-five, and, lastly, one hundred and twenty-eight. I am obliged to infer there is a studied backwardness in the officers of the State, who ought to give me the information you require respecting the supplies of different kinds which have been furnished to the use of the United States. Indeed, I find on inquiry, that their joint information will not be so full as to satisfy your intentions; and that this cannot be done till you have appointed a commissioner of accounts, authorized to enter into all the details, aided by some legislative arrangement which may be obtained the next session.

TO TIMOTHY PICKERING [1]

ALBANY, Sept. 7, 1782.

DEAR SIR:

I this day received your letter of the 20th August. Mr. Morris has advised me of the bills you describe, and directed my purchasing them, together with his notes, and the bank notes, with what money shall come into my hands on public account. They are

[1] The well-known Massachusetts soldier and statesman; at this time quarter-master-general.

now beginning to collect the tax imposed for the use of the United States, though I can as yet form no judgment with what success or expedition. I shall with pleasure give you the information you ask, but I would rather wish to be excused from anticipation by previous deposits in my hands, as that will, in some measure, pledge me to give a preference to the bills deposited, and may hereafter expose me to a charge of partiality. There have been several applications to me for a similar anticipation, which I have avoided, reserving to myself the power of paying the bills as they shall be presented, and in proportion to the nearness or remoteness of the periods of payments.

You may, however, depend that I shall be happy to assist your department, and will keep in view your present request. I hope towards the latter end of the month I shall receive something considerable on the late tax.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, Sept. 14, 1782.

SIR:

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 29th of August, the contents of which shall be executed.

I have just received by the post accounts of the specific supplies furnished by the State, copies of which I shall prepare to be transmitted to you by the next post, as I am to return the originals, which are for the inspection of the Legislature. I hope to add to these accounts of the moneys supplied.

I have written to you a number of letters since my journey to Poughkeepsie, of which, as they contain some things of a confidential nature, I am not without anxiety to learn the safe arrival.

I should also have been happy to have received your instructions against the meeting of the committee, which is to take place to-morrow. As they will have other business, if I hear from you by the next post, I shall not be too late. I am at a loss to know whether I ought to press the establishment of permanent *funds* or not; though, unless I receive your instructions, following my own apprehensions of what are probably your views, I shall dwell on this article.

I inclose you a copy of the letter of the Governor, of the 2d inst., from which you will see his hopes. Mine are not so good. In this vicinity, always delinquent, little is doing.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, Sept. 21, 1782.

SIR:

The hurry in which I wrote to you by the last post prevented my examining particularly the papers which I informed you I had received. On a more careful inspection of them I found them not so complete as I had hoped. There is a general statement of specific supplies; but the returns referred to in that for the particulars were by some mistake omitted. I have written for them, but they have not yet

arrived; when they do I shall lose no time in forwarding them.

I observe there is nothing respecting transportation, and there is a part of the supplies for the period before Colonel Hay came into office which is estimated on a scale of proportion—too vague a method to be satisfactory. I have urged him to send me an account of the transportation, and to collect, as speedily as possible, official returns of the supplies above mentioned.

There is a practice obtaining, which appears to me to contravene your views. The contractors, I am informed, have gotten into a method of carrying your bills immediately to the collectors and drawing the specie out of their hands, by which means the paper never goes into circulation at all, but passes, so to speak, immediately out of one hand of the public into the other. The people, therefore, can never be familiarized to the paper, nor can it ever obtain a general currency.

If the specie were to come in to the receivers, and the contractors were left under a necessity of exerting their influence to induce the inhabitants to take your notes, to be afterwards redeemed by the receivers agreeably to your plan, this would gradually accustom the people to place confidence in the notes, and though the circulation at first should be momentary, it might come to be more permanent.

I am in doubt whether, on the mere speculation of an evil, without your instructions, I ought to take any step to prevent this practice. For, should I forbid the exchange, it might possibly cause a sus-

picion that there was a preference of the paper to the specie, which might injure its credit.

I have thought of a method to prevent, without forbidding it in direct terms. This was to require each collector to return the names of the persons from whom he received taxes, and in different columns specify the kind of money, whether specie, your notes, or bank notes, in which the tax was paid, giving the inhabitants receipts accordingly, and paying in the money in the same species in which it was received. This would cover the object.

I have tried to prevail upon the county treasurer of this place to instruct the collectors accordingly; but the great aim of all these people is to avoid trouble, and he affected to consider the matter as a Herculean labor. Nor will it be done without a legislative injunction.

A method of this kind would tend much to check fraud in the collectors, and would have many good consequences.

I thought it my duty, at any rate, to apprise you of the practice, that, if my apprehensions are right, it may not be continued without control. I have reason to believe it is very extensive—by no means confined to this State.

Permit me to make one more observation. Your notes, though in credit with the merchants by way of remittance, do not enter far into ordinary circulation, and this principally on account of their size; which even makes them inconvenient for paying taxes. The taxes of very few amount to twenty dollars a single tax; and though the farmers might

combine to sell their produce for the notes, to pay the taxes jointly; yet this is not always convenient, and will seldom be practised. If the notes were, in considerable part, of five eight, or ten dollars, their circulation would be far more general; the merchants would, even in their retail operations, give specie in exchange for balances, which few of them care to do, or can do, with the larger notes; though they are willing to take them for their goods.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

September 28, 1782.

SIR:

I have been honored this week with your letters of the 28th August, 6th, 12th, and 17th instant, with their inclosures.

It gives me the most real pleasure to find that my past communications have met with your approbation; and I feel a particular satisfaction in the friendly confidence which your letters manifest.

I am persuaded that substantial reasons have determined your choice in a particular instance to Doctor Tillotson; and I am flattered by the attention you have obligingly paid to my recommendations of Col. Malcolm and Mr. Lawrence. Those gentlemen are now here. They make you the warmest acknowledgments for your offer, but decline leaving the State; which, indeed, is not compatible with the present prospects of either of them.

I am glad to have had an opportunity of perusing your letter to this State, at which so much excep-

tion has been taken; because it has confirmed me in what I presumed, that there has been much unjustifiable ill-humor upon the occasion. I will make use of the knowledge I have to combat misrepresentation.

Yours of the 29th of July, to Congress, is full of principles and arguments as luminous as they are conclusive. 'T is to be lamented that they have not had more weight than we are to infer from the momentary expedient adopted by the resolutions of the 4th and 10th; which will, alone, not be satisfactory to the public creditors; and I fear will only tend to embarrass your present operations, without answering the end in view. The more I see, the more I find reason for those who love this country to weep over its blindness.

The committee on the subject of taxation are met. Some have their plans, and they must protect their own children, however misshapen; others have none, but are determined to find fault with all. I expect little, but I shall promote any thing, though imperfect, that will mend our situation.

The public creditors in this quarter have had a meeting, and appointed a committee to devise measures. The committee will report petitions to Congress, the Legislature, and an address to the public creditors in other parts of the State to appoint persons to meet in convention, to unite in some common measure. I believe they will also propose a general convention of all the creditors in the different States.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, October 5, 1782.

SIR:

In my last I informed you that the committee appointed by the Legislature on the subject of taxation were together. In spite of my efforts, they have parted without doing any thing decisive. They have, indeed, agreed upon several matters, and those of importance, but they have not reduced them to the form of a report, which, in fact, leaves every thing afloat, to be governed by the impressions of the moment when the Legislature meets.

The points agreed upon are these: That there shall be an actual valuation of land, and a tax of so much in the pound,—the great diversity in the qualities of land would not suffer them to listen to an estimated valuation, or to a tax by the quantity, agreeably to the idea in your late report to Congress: that there shall be also a tariff of all personal property, to be also taxed at so much in the pound; that there shall be a specific tax on carriages, clocks, watches, and other similar articles of luxury; that money at usury shall be taxed at a fixed rate in the pound, excluding that which is loaned to the public; that houses in all towns shall be taxed at a certain proportion of the annual rent; that there shall be a poll-tax on all single men from fifteen upwards; and that the collection of the taxes should be advertised to the lowest bidder, at a fixed rate per cent., bearing all subordinate expenses.

Among other things which were rejected, I pressed hard for an excise on distilled liquors, but all that

could be carried on this article was a license on taverns.

The committee were pretty generally of opinion that the system of funding for payment of old debts and for procuring further credit, was wise and indispensable, but a majority thought it would be unwise in one State to contribute in this way alone.

Nothing was decided on the quantum of taxes which the State was able to pay; those who went furthest did not exceed seventy thousand pounds, of which fifty for the use of the United States.

I send you my cash account, which is for what has been received in this county. We have not heard from the others.

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, October 9, 1782.

SIR:

I wrote you a hasty letter by the last post, which arrived late, and set out very soon after its arrival.

Since that I have received two thousand dollars, all in your bills on Mr. Swanwick, in favor of Messrs. Sands & Co. One half the sum is in bills payable in February next, exchanged by them for specie with one of the county treasurers. I am sensible there is an inconvenience in this in different ways, but it appears by your letter of the 19th of July that you mean to have those bills received upon the same footing with your and the bank notes, without regard to the time they have to run. I have, however, induced the treasurer to write in a manner that I hope will discourage like exchanges in future without

giving any unfavorable impression. Besides the inconvenience from this practice, which I mentioned in a former letter, there is another which I am persuaded will result.

People will get into a way of discounting your bills and notes with the treasurers and collectors, to the injury of their credit.

Probably you are apprised of a fact which, however, I think it my duty to mention: It is that the bank notes pass pretty currently as cash, with a manifest preference to your notes.

I have not yet received the other papers relative to the account of supplies I have sent you.

I hope to be able to inclose you a copy of the address of the public creditors in this town to the rest of that denomination in this State. It inculcates the ideas which ought to prevail.

I have not yet heard of your messenger, Mr. Brown. I presume his circuit is regulated by your occasional direction.[1]

TO DE NOAILLES [2]

1782.

Esteem for your talents and acquirements is a sentiment which, from my earliest acquaintance

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

[2] Louis Marie, Vicomte de Noailles, one of the most brilliant of the French officers in our Revolution. After his return to France he took an active part on the popular side in the Revolution, but fled in 1792, being then with the army, and took refuge in England and afterwards in the United States. His wife was guillotined in 1794. After the reign of terror was over he returned to France, had his name erased from the list of *emigrés* and took service again in the army. In 1803 he was sent to St. Domingo, and on his way thence to Cuba he was killed in an action with an English corvette.

with you, my dear Viscount, I have shared in common with all those who have the happiness of knowing you; but a better knowledge of your character has given it, in my eyes, a more intrinsic merit, and has attached me to you by a friendship founded upon qualities as rare as they are estimable. Averse as I am to professions, I cannot forbear indulging this declaration, to express to you the pleasure I felt at receiving (after an inexplicable delay) the letter you were so obliging as to write me before your departure from Boston. It was of that kind which is always produced by those attentions of friends we value: which, not being invited by circumstances, nor necessitated by the forms of society, bespeak the warmth of the heart. At least my partiality for you makes me fond of viewing it in this light, and I cherish the opinion.

I was chagrined to find that you left us with an intention not to return. Though I should be happy if, by a removal of the war, this country should cease to be a proper theatre for your exertions, yet, if it continues to be so, I hope you will find sufficient motives to engage you to change your resolution. Wherever you are you will be useful and distinguished; but the ardent desire I have of meeting you again makes me wish America may be your destination. I would willingly do it in France, as you invite me to do, but the prospect of this is remote. I must make a more solid establishment here before I can conveniently go abroad. There is no country I have a greater curiosity to see, or which I am persuaded would be so interesting to me as yours.

I should be happy to renew and improve the valuable acquaintances from thence, which this war has given me an opportunity of making; and, though I could not flatter myself with deriving any advantage from it, I am persuaded it is there I should meet with the greatest number of those you describe, who, etc., —but considerations of primary importance will oblige me to submit to the mortification of deferring my visit.

In the meantime I should be too much the gainer by communication with you, not gladly to embrace the offer you so politely make for writing to each other.

The period, since you left us, has been too barren of events to enable me to impart any thing worth attention. The enemy continue in possession of Charleston and Savannah, and leave us masters of the rest of the country. General Greene has detached Wayne to Georgia; but I believe his views do not extend beyond the mere possession of the country. It is said the Assemblies of the two invaded States are about meeting, to restore the administration of government. This will be a step to strengthening the hands of General Greene, and counteracting the future intrigues of the enemy. Many are sanguine in believing that all the southern posts will be evacuated, and that a fleet of transports is actually gone to bring the garrisons away. For my part, I have doubts upon the subject. My politics are, that while the present ministry can maintain their seats and procure supplies, they will prosecute the war on the mere chance of events; and that while this is

the plan, they will not evacuate posts so essential as points of departure; from whence, on any favorable turn of affairs, to renew their attack on our most vulnerable side. Nor will they relinquish objects that would be so useful to them, should the worst happen in a final negotiation. Clinton, it is said, is cutting a canal across New York Island, through the low grounds, about a mile and a half from the city. This will be an additional obstacle; but if we have, otherwise, the necessary means to operate, it will not be an insurmountable one. I do not hear that he is constructing any other new works of consequence. To you, who are so thoroughly acquainted with the military posture of things in this country, I need not say that the activity of the next campaign must absolutely depend on effectual succors from France. I am convinced we shall have a powerful advocate in you. La Fayette, we know, will bring "the whole house" with him if he can.

There has been no material change in our internal situation since you left us. The capital successes we have had have served rather to increase the hopes than the exertions of the particular States. But in one respect we are in a mending way. Our financier has hitherto conducted himself with great ability, has acquired an entire personal confidence, revived in some measure the public credit, and is conciliating fast the support of the moneyed men. His operations have hitherto hinged chiefly on the seasonable aids from your country; but he is urging the establishment of permanent funds among ourselves; and though, from the nature and temper of our

governments, his applications will meet with a dilatory compliance, it is to be hoped they will by degrees succeed.

The institution of a bank has been very serviceable to him; the commercial interest, finding great advantages in it, and anticipating much greater, is disposed to promote the plan; and nothing but moderate funds, permanently pledged for the security of lenders, is wanting to make it an engine of the most extensive and solid utility. By the last advices there is reason to believe the delinquent States will shortly comply with the requisition of Congress for a duty on our imports. This will be a great resource to Mr. Morris; but it will not alone be sufficient.

Upon the whole, however, if the war continues another year, it will be necessary that Congress should again recur to the generosity of France for pecuniary assistance. The plans of the financier cannot be so matured as to enable us by any possibility to dispense with this; and if he should fail for want of support, we must replunge into that confusion and distress which had liked to have proved fatal to us, and out of which we are slowly emerging. The cure, on a relapse, would be infinitely more difficult than ever.

I have given you an uninteresting but a faithful sketch of our situation. You may expect, from time to time, to receive from me the progress of our affairs; and I know you will overpay me.

TO GENERAL GREENE

ALBANY, October 12, 1782.

DEAR GENERAL:

It is an age since I have either written to you or received a line from you; yet I persuade myself you have not been the less convinced of my affectionate attachment and warm participation in all those events which have given you that place in your country's esteem and approbation which I have known you to deserve, while your enemies and rivals were most active in sullying your reputation.

You will perhaps learn before this reaches you that I have been appointed a member of Congress. I expect to go to Philadelphia in the ensuing month, where I shall be happy to correspond with you with our ancient confidence; and I shall entreat you not to confine your observations to military subjects, but to take in the whole scope of national concerns. I am sure your ideas will be useful to me and to the public.

I feel the deepest affliction at the news we have just received of the loss of our dear and estimable friend Laurens. His career of virtue is at an end. How strangely are human affairs conducted, that so many excellent qualities could not insure a more happy fate! The world will feel the loss of a man who has left few like him behind, and America of a citizen whose heart realized that patriotism of which others only talk. I shall feel the loss of a friend I truly and most tenderly loved, and one of a very small number.

* * * * * *

TO ROBERT MORRIS

ALBANY, October 26, 1782.

SIR:

I am honored with your letters of the 5th, 15th, and 16th instant.

The detail you have been pleased to enter into in that of the 5th exhibits very cogent reasons for confining yourself to pretty large denominations of notes. Some of them had occurred to me, others had not; but I thought it my duty to state to you the operation which that circumstance had, as in the midst of the variety and extent of the objects which occupy your attention, you may not have so good opportunities of seeing the effect of your plans in detail. While I acknowledge that your observations have corrected my ideas upon the subject, and shown me that there would be danger in generally lessening the denominations of the paper issued, I should be uncandid not to add that it still appears to me there would be a preponderance of advantages in having a *part* of a smaller amount. I shall not trouble you at present with any further reasons for this opinion.

I have immediately on receipt of your letter taken measures for the publication of your advertisement in the newspapers of this State.

You will perceive by the enclosed cash account that, since my last, I have received five and twenty hundred dollars. This was procured in part of the loan I mentioned to you. It was chiefly paid to me in specie, and I have exchanged it with Col. Pickering and Mr. Duer for the notes; the latter had twelve

hundred dollars. Taxes collect slowly, but I must shortly receive two or three hundred pounds more, of which Mr. Duer will have the principal benefit, as it appears by your letter to him, that you hoped he might receive three thousand dollars from me.

As I may shortly set out for Philadelphia, I wish to surrender to Mr. Tillotson, as soon as you think proper, the office in which he is to succeed.

TO LAFAYETTE

ALBANY, Nov. 3, 1782.

Since we parted, my dear Marquis, at Yorktown, I have received three letters from you; one written on your way to Boston, two from France. I acknowledge that I have written to you only once, but the reason has been that I have been taught daily to expect your return. This I should not have done from my own calculations, for I saw no prospect but of an inactive campaign; and you had much better be intriguing for your hobby-horse at Paris than loitering away your time here. Yet they seem to be convinced at headquarters that you were certainly coming out; and by your letter it appears to have been your own expectation. I imagine you have relinquished it by this time.

I have been employed for the last ten months in rocking the cradle and studying the art of *fleecing* my neighbors. I am now a grave counsellor-at-law, and shall soon be a grave member of Congress. The Legislature, at their last session, took it into their

heads to name me, pretty unanimously, one of their delegates.

I am going to throw away a few months more in public life, and then retire a simple citizen and good *pater familias*. I set out for Philadelphia in a few days. You see the disposition I am in. You are condemned to run the race of ambition all your life. I am already tired of the career, and dare to leave it.

But you would not give a pin for my letter unless politics or war made a part of it. You tell me they are employed in building *a peace*, and other accounts say it is nearly finished. I hope the work may meet with no interruptions. It is necessary for America, especially if your army is taken from us, as we are told will soon be the case. That was an essential *point d'appui*, though money was the *primum mobile* of our finances, which must now lose the little activity lately given them. Our trade is prodigiously cramped. These States are in no humor for continuing exertions; if the war lasts it must be carried on by external succors. I make no apology for the inertness of this country. I detest it, but since it exists I am sorry to see other resources diminish. Your ministers ought to know best what they are doing, but if the war goes on and the removal of the army does not prove an unwise measure, I renounce all future pretensions to judgment. I think, however, the circumstances of the enemy oblige them to peace.

We have been hoping that they would abandon their posts in these States. It no doubt was once in contemplation, but later appearances are rather ambiguous. I begin to suspect that if peace is not

made, New York and Charleston—the former at least—will still be held.

There is no probability that I shall be one of the Commissioners of Peace. It is a thing I do not desire myself, and which I imagine other people will not desire.

Our army is now in excellent order, but small.

The temper we are in respecting the alliance, you will see from public acts. There never was a time of greater unanimity on that point.

I wish I durst enter into a greater detail with you, but our cipher is not fit for it, and I fear to trust it in another shape.

Is there any thing you wish on this side the water? You know the warmth and sincerity of my attachment. Command me.

I have not been so happy as to see Mr. De Segur. The title of your friend would have been a title to every thing in my power to manifest. Adieu.

General and Mrs. Schuyler and Mrs. Hamilton all join warmly in the most affectionate remembrances to you.

As to myself, I am in truth,

Yours *pour la vie.*

I wrote a long letter to the Viscount De Noailles, whom I also love. Has he received it? Is the worthy Gouvion well? Has he succeeded? How is it with our friend Gimat? How is it with General Du Portail? All those men are men of merit, and interest my best wishes.

Poor Laurens! He has fallen a sacrifice to his

ardor in a trifling skirmish in South Carolina. You know how truly I loved him, and will judge how much I regret him.

I will write you again soon after my arrival at Philadelphia.

TO THE GOVERNOR OF RHODE ISLAND [1]

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 11, 1782.

SIR:

Congress are equally affected and alarmed by the information they have received that the Legislature of your State, at their last meeting, have refused their concurrence in establishing a duty on imports. They consider this measure as so indispensable to the prosecution of the war, that a sense of duty and regard to the common safety compel them to renew their efforts to engage a compliance with it. And in this view they have determined to send a deputation of three members to your State, as expressed in the inclosed resolution. The gentleman they have appointed will be able to lay before you a full and just representation of public affairs, from which, they flatter themselves, will result a conviction of the propriety of their solicitude upon the present occasion. Convinced by past experience of the zeal and patriotism of the State of Rhode Island, they cannot doubt that it will yield to those urgent considerations which flow from a knowledge of our true situation.

They will only briefly observe that the increasing discontents of the army, the loud clamors of the pub-

[1] At this time William Greene.

lic creditors, and the extreme disproportion between the public supplies and the demands of the public service, are so many invincible arguments for the fund recommended by Congress. They feel themselves unable to devise any other that will be more efficacious, less exceptionable, or more generally agreeable; and if this is refused, they anticipate calamities of the most menacing nature—with this consolation, however, that they have faithfully discharged their trust, and that the mischiefs which follow cannot be attributed to them.

A principal object of the proposed fund is to *procure loans abroad.* If no security can be held out to lenders, the success of these must necessarily be very limited. The last accounts on the subject were not flattering; and when intelligence shall arrive in Europe that the State of Rhode Island has disagreed to the only fund which has yet been devised, there is every reason to apprehend it will have a fatal influence upon their future progress.

Deprived of this resource, our affairs must in all probability hasten to a dangerous crisis, and these States be involved in greater embarrassments than they have yet experienced, and from which it may be much more difficult to emerge. Congress will only add a request to your Excellency, that if the Legislature should not be sitting, it may be called together as speedily as possible, to enable the gentlemen whom they have deputed to perform the purpose of their mission.[1]

[1] This letter was written by Hamilton as one of the committee of Congress to whom the matter was referred.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 18, 1782.

DEAR SIR:

I shall very shortly be out of cash, and shall be much obliged to you to forward me the State allowance. It will answer as well in Mr. Morris' notes as specie, provided the notes have not more than a fortnight or so to run. It will be better if they are due. A disappointment in this will greatly embarrass me, and from what your Excellency said, I take it for granted it cannot happen. Nothing new except a probable account of the evacuation of Charleston.[1]

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 12, 1783.

SIR:

I am honored with your Excellency's letter of the 29th of December. I have received an order from Colonel Hay on Mr. Sands, which I have no doubt will shortly be paid. I have felt no inconvenience from not having the money sooner.

Since my last to you we have received no further accounts from Europe, so that we remain in the same uncertainty with respect to the negotiations for peace. Whether it will take place or not is a problem of difficult solution. The duplicity and unsteadiness for which Lord Shelburne is remarkable will not justify any confidence in his intentions; and the variety of interests to be conciliated in a treaty

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, iii., 7.

of peace, with the best dispositions on all sides, must render it a work of difficulty. I suspect too the Spaniards and the Dutch will have large demands.

We have now here a deputation from the army, and feel the mortification of a total disability to comply with their just expectations. If, however, the matter is taken up in a proper manner, I think their application may be turned to a good account. Every day proves more and more the insufficiency of the Confederation. The proselytes to this opinion are increasing fast, and many of the most sensible men acknowledge the wisdom of the measure recommended by your Legislature at their last sitting. Various circumstances conspire at this time to incline to the adoption of it, and I am not without hope it may ere long take place. But I am far from being sanguine.

We are deliberating on some mode for carrying that article of the Confederation into execution, which respects the valuation of lands, to ascertain the quotas of the several States. None has yet been proposed that appears to me eligible. I confess I dislike the principle altogether; but we are tied down by the Confederation.

The affairs of the Grants have been no further touched since the resolutions transmitted to you. It is a business in which nobody cares to act with decision. As intimated before, I must doubt the perseverance of Congress, if military coercion should become necessary. I am clear the only chance the Legislature have for a recovery of any part of the revolted territory is by a compromise with New

Hampshire, and this compromise must originate between the States themselves. I hope the Legislature will revise the late act for confirming the possessions of those who hold lands in that country. I am certain there are doubts upon the subject, and it were much to be wished such doubts did not exist. The present dissatisfaction of the army is much opposed to any experiment of force in a service where scruples of interest or prejudice may operate.[1]

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, February 7, 1783.

SIR:

Flattering myself that your knowledge of me will induce you to receive the observations I make, as dictated by a regard to the public good, I take the liberty to suggest to you my ideas on some matters of delicacy and importance. I view the present juncture as a very interesting one. I need not observe how far the temper and situation of the army make it so. The state of our finances was perhaps never more critical. I am under injunctions which will not permit me to disclose some facts that would at once demonstrate this position; but I think it probable you will be possessed of them through another channel. It is, however, certain that there has scarcely been a period of the Revolution which called more for wisdom and decision in Congress. Unfortunately for us, we are a body not governed by reason or foresight, but by circumstances. It is

[1] Now first printed from the Clinton papers at Albany.

probable we shall not take the proper measures; and if we do not, a few months may open an embarrassing scene. This will be the case whether we have peace or a continuance of the war.

If the war continues, it would seem that the army must, in June, subsist itself, *to defend the country.* If peace should take place, it *will* subsist itself, *to procure justice to itself.* It appears to be a prevailing opinion in the army that the disposition to recompense their services will cease with the necessity for them, and that, if they once lay down their arms, they part with the means of obtaining justice. It is to be lamented that appearances afford too much ground for their distrust.

It becomes a serious inquiry: What is the true line of policy? The claims of the army, urged with moderation, but with firmness, may operate on those weak minds which are influenced by their apprehensions more than by their judgments, so as to produce a concurrence in the measures which the exigencies of affairs demand. They may add weight to the applications of Congress to the several States. So far a useful turn may be given to them. But the difficulty will be to keep a *complaining* and *suffering army* within the bounds of moderation.

This your Excellency's influence must effect. In order to do it, it will be advisable not to discountenance their endeavors to procure redress, but rather, by the intervention of confidential and prudent persons, *to take the direction of them.* This, however, must not appear. It is of moment to the public tranquillity, that your Excellency should preserve

the confidence of the army without losing that of the people. This will enable you, in case of extremity, to guide the current, and to bring order, perhaps even good, out of confusion. 'T is a part that requires address; but 't is one which your own situation, as well as the welfare of the community, points out.

I will not conceal from your Excellency a truth which it is necessary you should know. An idea is propagated in the army that delicacy, carried to an extreme, prevents your espousing its interests with sufficient warmth. The falsehood of this opinion no one can be better acquainted with than myself, but it is not the less mischievous for being false. Its tendency is to impair that influence which you may exert with advantage, should any commotions unhappily ensue, to moderate the pretensions of the army, and make their conduct correspond with their duty.

The great *desideratum* at present is the establishment of general funds, which alone can do justice to the creditors of the United States (of whom the army forms the most meritorious class), restore public credit, and supply the future wants of government. This is the object of all men of sense. In this the influence of the army, properly directed, may co-operate.

The intimations I have thrown out will suffice to give your Excellency a proper conception of my sentiments. You will judge of their reasonableness or fallacy, but I persuade myself you will do justice to my motives. General Knox has the confidence of

the army, and is a man of sense. I think he may be safely made use of. Situated as I am, your Excellency will feel the confidential nature of these observations.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

February 24, 1783.

SIR:

In my letter of the 14th I informed your Excellency that Congress were employed in devising a plan for carrying the eighth article of the Confederation into execution. This business is at length brought to a conclusion. I enclose, for the information of the Legislature, the proceedings upon it in different stages, by which they will see the part I have acted. But as I was ultimately left in a small minority, I think it my duty to explain the motives upon which my opposition to the general course of the House was founded.

I am of opinion that the article of the Confederation itself was ill-judged. In the first place I do not believe there is any general representative of the wealth of a nation, the criterion of its ability to pay taxes. There are only two that can be thought of—*land* and *numbers*.

The revenues of the United Provinces (general and particular) were computed, before the present war, to more than half as much as those of Great Britain. The extent of their territory is not one fourth part as great, their population less than a third. The comparison is still more striking between those provinces and the Swiss Cantons, in

both of which extent of territory and population are nearly the same, and yet the revenues of the former are five times as large as those of the latter; nor could any efforts of taxation bring them to any thing like a level. In both cases the advantages for agriculture are superior in those countries which afford least revenue in proportion. I have selected these examples because they are most familiar, but whoever will extend the comparison between the different nations of the world will perceive that the position I have laid down is supported by universal experience.

The truth is, the ability of a country to pay taxes depends on infinite combinations of physical and moral causes which can never be accommodated to any general rule—climate, soil, productions, advantages for navigation, government, genius of the people, progress of arts and industry, and an endless variety of circumstances. The diversities are sufficiently great in these States to make an infinite difference in their relative wealth, the proportion of which can never be found by any common measure whatever.

The only possible way, then, of making them contribute to the general expense in an equal proportion to their means, is by general taxes imposed under Continental authority.

In this mode there would no doubt be inequalities, and, for a considerable time, material ones, but experience, and the constant operation of a general interest, which, by the very collision of particular interests, must, in the main, prevail in a Continental

deliberative, would at length correct those inequalities, and balance one tax that should bear hard upon one State by another that should have proportional weight in others. This idea, however, was not, at the period of framing the Confederation, and is not yet, agreeable to the spirit of the time. To futurity we must leave the discovery how far this spirit is wise or foolish. One thing only is now certain: that Congress having the discretionary power of determining the quantum of money to be paid into the general treasury towards defraying the common expenses, have in effect the constitutional power of general taxation.

The restraints upon the exercise of this power amount to the perpetuating a rule for fixing the proportions, which must of necessity produce inequality, and by refusing the Federal Government a power of specific taxation and of collection, without substituting any other adequate means of coercion, do, in fact, leave the compliance with Constitutional requisitions to the good-will of the respective States. Inequality is inherent in the theory of the Confederation, and, in the practice, that inequality must increase in proportion to the honesty or dishonesty of the component parts. This vice will either, in its consequences, reform the Federal Constitution or dissolve it.

If a general standard must be fixed, numbers were preferable to land. Modes might be devised to ascertain the former with tolerable precision; but I am persuaded the experiment will prove that the value of all the land in each State cannot be

ascertained with any thing like exactness. Both these measures have the common disadvantage of being no equal representative of the wealth of the people, but one is much more simple, definite, and certain than the other.

I have indulged myself in these remarks to show that I have little expectation of success from any mode of carrying the article in question into execution upon equitable principles. I owe it, however, to myself to declare that my opposition did not arise from this source. The Confederation has pointed out this mode, and, though I would heartily join in a representation of the difficulties (of which every man of sense must be sensible on examination) that occur in the execution of the plan to induce the States to consent to a change, yet, as this was not the disposition of a majority of Congress, I would have assented to any mode of attempting it, which was not either obviously mischievous or impracticable.

The first plan proposed, as your Excellency will see, was an actual valuation of each State by itself. This was evidently making the interested party judge in his own cause. Those who have seen the operation of this principle between the counties in the same State, and the districts in the same county, cannot doubt a moment that the valuations on this plan would have been altogether unequal and unjust. Without supposing more liberality in one State than in another, the degree of care, judgment, and method employed in the execution would alone make extreme differences in the results.

This mode has also the further inconvenience of awakening all the jealousies of the several States against each other. Each would suspect that its neighbor had favored itself, whether the partiality appeared or not. It would be impossible to silence these distrusts and to make the States sit down satisfied with the justice of each other. Every new requisition for money would be a new signal for discussion and clamor, and the seeds of disunion, already sown too thick, would be not a little multiplied.

To guard against these evils the plan proposes a revision by Congress; but it is easy to be seen that such a power could not be exercised. Should any States return defective valuations it would be difficult to find sufficient evidence to determine them such. To alter would not be admissible, for Congress could have no data which could be presumed equivalent to those which must have governed the judgment of commissioners under oath, or an actual view of the premises. To do either this or reject would be an impeachment of the honor of the States, which it is not probable there would be decision enough to hazard, and which, if done, could not fail to excite serious disgusts. There is a wide difference between a single State exercising such a power over its own counties and a confederate government exercising it over sovereign States which compose the Confederacy. It might also happen that too many States would be interested in the defective valuations to leave a sufficient number willing either to alter or to reject.

These considerations prevailed to prevent the plan being adopted by the majority.

The last plan may be less mischievous than the first, but it appears to me altogether ineffectual. The mere quantity of lands granted and surveyed, with the general species of buildings upon them, can certainly be no criteria to determine their value. The plan does not even distinguish the improved from the unimproved land, the qualities of soil or degrees of improvement; the qualities of the houses and other buildings are entirely omitted. These, it seems, are to be judged by the commissioners to be appointed by each State. But I am unable to conceive how any commissioner can form the least estimate of these circumstances with respect even to his own State, much less with respect to other States, which would be necessary to establish a just relative value. If even there was a distinction of improved from unimproved land, by supposing an intrinsic value in the land and adopting general rates, something nearer the truth might be attained; but it must now be all conjecture and uncertainty.

The numbers of inhabitants, distinguishing white from black, are called for. This is not only totally foreign to the Confederation, but can answer no reasonable purpose. It has been said that the proportion of numbers may guide and correct the estimates. An assertion, purely verbal, *has no meaning*. A judgment must first be formed of the value of the lands upon some principles. If this should be altered by the proportion of numbers, it is plain numbers would be substituted to land.

Another objection to this plan is that it lets in the particular interests of the States to operate in the returns of the quantities of land, number of buildings, and number of inhabitants. But the principle of this objection applies less forcibly here than against the former plan.

Whoever will consider the plain import of the eighth article of the Confederation must be convinced that it intended an *actual* and *specific* valuation of land, buildings, and improvements,—not a mere general estimate, according to the present plan. While we insist, therefore, upon adhering to the Confederation, we should do it in reality, not barely in appearance.

Many of those who voted for this scheme had as bad an opinion of it as myself, but they were induced to accede to it by a persuasion that some plan for the purpose was expected by the States, and that none better, in the present circumstances of the country, could be fallen upon.

A leading rule which I have laid down for the direction of my conduct is this, that, while I would have a just deference for the expectations of the States, I would never consent to amuse them by attempts which must either fail in the execution or be productive of evil. I would rather incur the negative inconveniences of delay than the positive mischiefs of injudicious expedients. A contrary conduct serves to destroy confidence in the government, the greatest misfortune that can befall a nation. There should, in my opinion, be a character of wisdom and efficiency in all the measures of the

Federal Council, the opposite of a spirit of temporizing concession.

I would have sufficient reliance on the judgments of the several States to hope that good reasons for not attempting a thing would be more satisfactory to them than precipitate and fruitless attempts.

My idea is that, taking it for granted the States will expect an experiment on the principle of the Confederation, the best plan will be to make it by commissioners, appointed by Congress, and acting under their authority. Congress might, in the first instance, appoint three or more of the principal characters in each State for probity and abilities, with a power to nominate other commissioners under them in each subdivision of the State. General principles might be laid down for the regulation of their conduct, by which uniformity in the manner of conducting the business would obtain. Sanctions of such solemnity might be prescribed and such notoriety given to every part of the transaction, that the commissioners could neither be careless nor partial without a sacrifice of reputation.

To carry this plan, however, into effect, with sufficient care and accuracy, would be a work both of time and expense; and, unfortunately, we are so pressed to find money for calls of immediate necessity, that we could not at present undertake a measure which would require so large a sum.

To me it appears evident that every part of a business which is of so important and universal concern should be transacted on uniform principles and

under the direction of that *body* which has a common interest.

In general, I regard the present moment, probably the dawn of peace, as peculiarly critical, and the measures which it shall produce as of great importance to the future welfare of these States. I am therefore scrupulously cautious of assenting to plans which appear to me founded on false principles.

Your Excellency will observe that the valuation of the lands is to be the standard for adjusting the accounts for past supplies between the United States and the particular States. This, if adhered to without allowance for the circumstances of those States which have been more immediately the theatre of the war, will charge our State for the past according to its *future ability* when in an entire condition, if the valuation should be made after we regain possession of the parts of the State now in the power of the enemy.

I have therefore introduced a motion for repeating the call, in a more earnest manner, upon the States to vest Congress with a power of making equitable abatements, agreeably to the spirit of the resolution of the 20th of February last, which few of the States have complied with. This motion has been committed. I know not what will be its fate.

Notwithstanding the opposition I have given, now the matter has been decided in Congress I hope the State will cheerfully comply with what is required. Unless each State is governed by this principle, there is an end to the Union. Every State will, no doubt, have a right in this case to accompany its

compliance with such remarks as it may think proper. After the plan was agreed upon it was committed to be put into form, and when reported, instead of commissioners, an alteration was carried for making the estimate by a grand committee.

February 27.

Mr. Morris has signified to Congress his resolution to resign by the 1st of June if adequate funds are not by that time provided. This will be a severe stroke to our affairs. No man fit for the office will be willing to supply his place, for the very reason he resigns.

'T is happy for us we have reasons to expect a peace. I am sorry that, by different accounts, it appears not to have been concluded late in December.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, March 5, 1783.

SIR:

I had the honor of writing your Excellency lately on a very confidential subject, and shall be anxious to know, as soon as convenient, whether the letter got safe to hand.

The bearer, Shattuck, thinks he can point out means of apprehending Wells and Knowlton,[1] the

[1] November 27, 1782, Congress directed Washington to apprehend and secure Luke Knowlton of Newfane and Samuel Wells of Brattleborough, in the New Hampshire Grants, for being in a dangerous correspondence and intercourse with the enemy. This affair probably grew out of the trouble between New York and New Hampshire, and the inhabitants of what is now Vermont. There was a party among the people there which was said to aim at a union with the British provinces.

two persons whom your Excellency was authorized to have taken into custody. I have desired him to call upon you to disclose the plan. I will not trouble your Excellency with any observation on the importance of getting hold of those persons.

The surmise that Mr. Arnold,[1] a member of Congress, gave intelligence to them of the design to take them, makes it peculiarly important.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, March 17, 1783.

SIR:

I am duly honored with your Excellency's letters of the 4th and 12th instant. It is much to be regretted, though not to be wondered at, that steps of so inflammatory a tendency have been taken in the army. Your Excellency has, in my opinion, acted wisely. The best way is ever not to attempt to stem a torrent, but to divert it.

I am happy to find you coincident in opinion with me on the conduct proper to be observed by yourself. I am persuaded more and more it is that which is most consistent with your own reputation and the public safety.

Our affairs wear a most serious aspect, as well foreign as domestic. Before this gets to hand your Excellency will probably have seen the provisional articles between Great Britain and these States. It might at first appearance be concluded that these

[1] Jonathan Arnold, delegate from Rhode Island, but a resident of Vermont. He was not re-elected to Congress, but there is no means of knowing whether Hamilton's suspicions were correct.

will be a prelude to a general peace, but there are strong reasons to doubt the truth of such a conclusion. Obstacles may arise from different quarters: from the demands of Spain and Holland; from the hope in France of greater acquisitions in the East; and perhaps still more probably, from the insincerity and duplicity of Lord Shelburne, whose politics, founded in the peculiarity of his situation, as well as in the character of the man, may well be suspected of insidiousness. I am really apprehensive if peace does not take place that the negotiations will tend to sow distrust among the allies and weaken the force of the common league. We have, I fear, men among us, and men in trust, who have a hankering after British connection. We have others whose confidence in France savors of credulity. The intrigues of the former and the incautiousness of the latter may be both, though in different degrees, injurious to the American interests, and make it difficult for prudent men to steer a proper course.

There are delicate circumstances with respect to the late foreign transactions, which I am not at liberty to reveal, but which, joined to our internal weaknesses, disorders, follies, and prejudices, make this country stand upon precarious ground.

Some use, perhaps, may be made of these ideas to induce moderation in the army. An opinion that their country does not stand upon a secure footing will operate upon the patriotism of the officers against hazarding any domestic commotions.

When I make these observations I cannot forbear adding that if no excesses take place I shall not be

sorry that ill-humors have appeared. I shall not regret importunity, if temperate, from the army.

There are good intentions in the majority of Congress, but there is not sufficient wisdom or decision. There are dangerous prejudices in the particular States opposed to those measures which alone can give stability and prosperity to the Union. There is a fatal opposition to Continental views. Necessity alone can work a reform. But how produce that necessity, how apply it, and how keep it within salutary bounds? I fear we have been contending for a shadow.

The affair of accounts I considered as having been put on a satisfactory footing. The particular States have been required to settle till the first of August, '80, and the Superintendent of Finance has been directed to take measures for settling since that period. I shall immediately see him on the subject.

We have had eight States and a half in favor of a commutation of the half pay for an average of ten years' purchase—that is, five years' full pay instead of half pay for life, which, on a calculation of annuities, is nearly an equivalent. I hope this will now shortly take place.

We have made considerable progress in a plan to be recommended to the several States for funding all the public debts, including those of the army, which is certainly the only way to restore public credit and enable us to continue the war by borrowing abroad, if it should be necessary to continue it.

I omitted mentioning to your Excellency that, from European intelligence, there is great reason to

believe, at all events—peace or war,—New York will be evacuated in the spring. It will be a pity if any domestic disturbances should change the plans of the British court.

P. S.—Your Excellency mentions that it has been surmised the plan in agitation was formed in Philadelphia, that combinations have been talked of between the public creditors and the army, and that members of Congress had encouraged the idea. This is partly true. I have myself urged in Congress the propriety of uniting the influence of the public creditors, and the army as part of them, to prevail upon the States to enter into their views. I have expressed the same sentiments out-of-doors. Several other members of Congress have done the same. The meaning, however, of all this was simply that Congress should adopt such a plan as would embrace the relief of all the public creditors, including the army, in order that the personal influence of some, the connections of others, and a sense of justice to the army, as well as the apprehension of ill consequences, might form a mass of influence in each State in favor of the measures of Congress. In this view, as I mentioned to your Excellency in a former letter, I thought the discontents of the army might be turned to a good account. I am still of opinion that their earnest but respectful applications for redress will have a good effect. As to any combination of *force*, it would only be productive of the horrors of a civil war, might end in the ruin of the country, and would certainly end in the ruin of the army.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, March 24, 1783.

SIR:

Your Excellency will, before this reaches you, have received a letter from the Marquis de Lafayette, informing you that the preliminaries of peace between all the belligerent powers have been concluded. I congratulate your Excellency on this happy conclusion of your labors. It now only remains to make solid establishments within, to perpetuate our Union, to prevent our being a ball in the hands of European powers, bandied against each other at their pleasure; in fine to make our independence truly a blessing. This, it is to be lamented, will be an arduous work; for, to borrow a figure from mechanics, the centrifugal is much stronger than the centripetal force in these States,—the seeds of disunion much more numerous than those of union.

I will add that your Excellency's exertions are as essential to accomplish this end as they have been to establish independence. I will upon a future occasion open myself upon this subject.

Your conduct in the affair of the officers is highly pleasing here. The measures of the army are such as I could have wished them, and will add new lustre to their character as well as strengthen the hands of Congress.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, March 25, 1783.

SIR:

I wrote your Excellency a day or two ago by express. Since that, a committee, appointed on the communications from you, have had a meeting, and find themselves embarrassed. They have requested me to communicate our embarrassments to you in confidence, and to ask your private opinion. The army, by their resolutions, express an expectation that Congress will not disband them previous to a settlement of accounts and the establishment of funds. Congress may resolve upon the first, but the general opinion is that they cannot constitutionally declare the second. They have no right, by the Confederation, to *demand* funds—they can only recommend—and to determine that the army shall be continued in service till the States grant them, would be to determine that the whole present army shall be a standing army during peace, unless the States comply with the requisition for funds. This, it is supposed, would excite the alarm and jealousies of the States, and increase, rather than lessen, the opposition to the funding scheme. It is also observed the longer the army is kept together the more the payment of past dues is procrastinated, the abilities of the States being exhausted for their immediate support, and a new debt every day incurred. It is further suggested that there is danger in keeping the army together in a state of inactivity, and that a separation of the several lines would facilitate the settlement of accounts, diminish present ex-

pense, and avoid the danger of union. It is added that the officers of each line, being on the spot, might, by their own solicitations and those of their friends, forward the adoption of funds in the different States.

A proposition will be transmitted to you by Colonel Bland, in the form of a resolution to be adopted by Congress, framed upon the principles of the foregoing reasoning.

Another proposition is contained in the following resolution:

"That the Commander-in-Chief be informed it is the intention of Congress to effect the settlement of the accounts of the respective lines previous to their reduction, and that Congress are doing, and will continue to do, every thing in their power towards procuring satisfactory securities for what shall be found due on such settlement."

The scope of this your Excellency will perceive without comment.

I am to request you will favor me with your sentiments on both the propositions, and in general with your ideas of what had best be done with reference to the expectation expressed by the officers; taking into view the situation of Congress. On one side the army expect they will not be disbanded till accounts are settled and funds established. On the other hand, they have no constitutional power of doing any thing more than to recommend funds, and are persuaded that these will meet with mountains of prejudice in some of the States.

A considerable progress has been made in a plan

for funding the public debts, and it is to be hoped it will erelong go forth to the States, with every argument that can give it success.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, March 25, 1783.

SIR:

The inclosed [1] I write more in a public than in a private capacity. Here I write as a citizen zealous for the true happiness of this country; as a soldier who feels what is due to an army which has suffered every thing and done much for the safety of America.

I sincerely wish *ingratitude* was not so natural to the human heart as it is. I sincerely wish there were no seeds of it in those who direct the councils of the United States. But while I urge the army to moderation, and advise your Excellency to take the direction of their discontents, and endeavor to confine them within the bounds of duty, I cannot, as an honest man, conceal from you that I am afraid their distrusts have too much foundation. Republican jealousy has in it a principle of hostility to an army, whatever be their merits, whatever be their claims to the gratitude of the community. It acknowledges their services with unwillingness, and rewards them with reluctance. I see this temper, though smothered with great care, involuntarily breaking out upon too many occasions. I often feel a mortification, which it would be impolitic to express,

[1] The "inclosed" is the preceding letter.

that sets my passions at variance with my reason. Too many, I perceive, if they could do it with safety or color, would be glad to elude the just pretensions of the army. I hope this is not the prevailing disposition.

But supposing the country ungrateful, what can the army do? It must submit to its hard fate. To seek redress by its arms would end in its ruin. The army would moulder by its own weight, and for want of the means of keeping together the soldiers would abandon their officers; there would be no chance of success without having recourse to means that would reverse our revolution. I make these observations, not that I imagine your Excellency can want motives to continue your influence in the path of moderation, but merely to show why I cannot myself enter into the views of coercion which some gentlemen entertain, for I confess, could force avail, I should almost wish to see it employed. I have an indifferent opinion of the honesty of this country, and ill forebodings as to its future system.

Your Excellency will perceive I have written with sensations of chagrin, and will make allowance for coloring, but the general picture is too true. God send us all more wisdom.

TO WASHINGTON

April, 1783.

SIR:

I have received your Excellency's letters of the thirty-first of March and fourth of April, the last today. The one to Colonel Bland, as member of the

committee, has been read in committee confidentially, and gave great satisfaction. The idea of not attempting to separate the army before the settlement of accounts, corresponds with my proposition. That of endeavoring to let them have some pay, had also appeared to me indispensable. The expectations of the army, as represented by your Excellency, are moderation itself. To-morrow we confer with the Superintendent of Finance on the subject of money. There will be difficulty, but not, we hope, insurmountable.

I thank your Excellency for the hints you are so obliging as to give me in your private letter. I do not wonder at the suspicions that have been infused; nor should I be surprised to hear that I have been pointed out as one of the persons concerned in playing the game described. But facts must speak for themselves. The gentlemen who were here from the army, and General McDougal who is still here, will be able to give a true account of those who have supported the just claims of the army, and of those who have endeavored to elude them.

There are two classes of men, sir, in Congress, of very different views: one attached to State, the other to Continental, politics. The latter have been strenuous advocates for funding the public debt upon solid securities; the former have given every opposition in their power, and have only been dragged into the measures which are now near being adopted, by the clamors of the army and other public creditors.

The advocates for Continental funds have blended

the interests of the army with other creditors, from a conviction that no funds for partial purposes will go through those States to whose citizens the United States are largely indebted; or, if they should be carried through, from impressions of the moment, would have the necessary stability, for the influence of those unprovided for would always militate against a provision for others in exclusion of them. It is in vain to tell men who have parted with a large part of their property on the public faith, that the services of the army are entitled to a preference; they would reason from their interest and their feelings; these would tell them that they had as great a title as any other class of the community to public justice, and that while this was denied to them it would be unreasonable to make them bear their part of a burthen for the benefit of others. This is the way they would reason; and as their influence in some of the States was considerable, they would have been able to prevent any partial provision.

But the question was not merely how to do justice to the creditors, but how to restore public credit. Taxation in this country, it was found, would not supply a sixth part of the public necessities. The loans in Europe were far short of the balance, and the prospect every day diminishing: the Court of France telling us in plain terms she could not even do as much as she had done; individuals in Holland, and everywhere else, refusing to part with their money on the precarious tenure of the mere faith of this country, without any pledge for the payment either of principal or interest.

In this situation what was to be done? It was essential to our cause that vigorous efforts should be made to restore public credit; it was necessary to combine all the motives to this end that could operate upon different descriptions of persons in the different States; the necessities and discontents of the army presented themselves as a powerful engine.

But, sir, these gentlemen would be puzzled to support their insinuations by a single fact. It was, indeed, proposed to appropriate the intended impost on trade to the army debt; and, what was extraordinary, by gentlemen who had expressed their dislike to the principle of the fund. I acknowledge I was one that opposed this, for the reasons already assigned and for these additional ones. *That* was the fund on which we most counted; to obtain further loans in Europe, it was necessary we should have a fund sufficient to pay the interest of what had been borrowed and what was to be borrowed. The truth was, these people, in this instance, wanted to play off the army against the funding system.

As to Mr. Morris, I will give your Excellency a true explanation of his conduct. He had been for some time pressing Congress to endeavor to obtain funds, and had found a great backwardness in the business. He found the taxes unproductive in the different States; he found the loans in Europe making a very slow progress; he found himself pressed on all hands for supplies; he found himself, in short, reduced to this alternative: either of making engagements which he could not fulfil, or declaring his resignation in case funds were not established by a

given time. Had he followed the first course, the bubble must soon have burst; he must have sacrificed his credit and his character, and public credit, already in a ruinous condition, would have lost its last support.

He wisely judged it better to resign. This might increase the embarrassments of the moment; but the necessity of the case, it was to be hoped, would produce the proper measures; and he might then resume the direction of the machine with advantage and success.

He also had some hope that his resignation would prove a stimulus to Congress.

He was, however, ill advised in the publication of his letters of resignation. This was an imprudent step, and has given a handle to his personal enemies, who, by playing upon the passions of others, have drawn some well-meaning men into the cry against him. But Mr. Morris certainly deserves a great deal from his country. I believe no man in this country but himself could have kept the money machine a-going during the period he has been in office. From every thing that appears, his administration has been upright as well as able.

The truth is, the old leaven of Deane and Lee is, at this day, working against Mr. Morris. He happened, in that dispute, to have been on the side of Deane; and certain men can never forgive him. A man whom I once esteemed, and whom I will rather suppose *duped* than wicked, is the second actor in this business.

The matter with respect to the army which has

occasioned most altercation in Congress and most dissatisfaction in the army, has been the half-pay. The opinions on this head have been two: one party was for referring the several lines to their States, to make such commutation as they should think proper; the other, for making the commutation by Congress, and funding it on Continental security. I was of this last opinion, and so were all those who will be represented as having made use of the army as puppets. Our principal reasons were: *Firstly*, by referring the lines to their respective States, those which were opposed to the half-pay would have taken advantage of the officers' necessities to make the commutation far short of an equivalent. *Secondly*, the inequality which would have arisen in the different States when the officers came to compare (as has happened in other cases), would have been a new source of discontent. *Thirdly*, such a reference was a continuance of the old wretched State system, by which the ties between Congress and the army have been nearly dissolved, by which the resources of the States have been diverted from the common treasury and wasted—a system which your Excellency has often justly reprobated.

I have gone into these details to give you a just idea of the parties in Congress. I assure you, upon my honor, sir, I have given you a candid state of facts, to the best of my judgment. The men against whom the suspicions you mention must be directed, are in general the most sensible, the most liberal, the most independent, and the most respectable characters in our body, as well as the most un-

equivocal friends to the army. In a word, they are the men who think continentally.

I am chairman of a committee for peace arrangements. We shall ask your Excellency's opinion at large on a proper military peace establishment. I will just hint to your Excellency, that our prejudices will make us wish to keep up as few troops as possible.

We this moment learn an officer is arrived from Sir Guy Carleton with dispatches, probably official accounts of peace.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, April 9, 1783.

SIR:

Congress having appointed a committee consisting of Messrs. Madison, Osgood, Wilson, Ellsworth, and myself, to consider what arrangements it will be proper to adopt in the different departments with reference to a peace, I am directed by the committee to address your Excellency on the subject of the military department.

The committee wish your Excellency's sentiments at large on such institutions of every kind for the interior defence of these States as may be best adapted to their circumstances, and conciliate security with economy and with the principles of our government. In this they will be glad if you will take as great latitude as you may think necessary, and will therefore omit entering into any details.

The committee apprehend it to be the intention

of Congress to lay down a general plan, to be carried into execution as circumstances will permit, and that in attending to such dispositions as the immediate situation of the country may require, they are chiefly desirous of establishing good principles that will have a permanent salutary operation.[1]

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, April 15, 1783.

SIR:

There are two resolutions passed relative to the restoration of the British prisoners, and to making arrangements for the surrender of the posts in the possession of the British troops; the first of which is to be transacted by you in conjunction with the Secretary of War, the latter by yourself alone. I will explain to you some doubts which have arisen in Congress with regard to the true construction of the provisional treaty, which may be of use to you in transacting the business above mentioned.

The sixth article declares that there shall be no future confiscations, etc., after the *ratification of the treaty in America*, and the seventh article makes the surrender of prisoners, evacuation of posts, cessation of hostilities, etc., to depend on that event, to wit, *the ratification of the treaty in America.*

Now the doubt is, whether *the treaty* means the provisional treaty *already concluded*, or the *definitive* treaty *to be concluded.* The last construction is most agreeable to the letter of the provisional articles, the former most agreeable to the usual prac-

[1] Now first printed from the Knox papers.

tice of nations, for hostilities commonly cease on the ratification of the preliminary treaty.

There is a great diversity of opinion in Congress. It will be, in my opinion, advisable, at the same time that we do not communicate our doubts to the British, to extract their sense of the matter from them.

This may be done by asking them at what periods they are willing to stipulate the surrender of posts, at the same time that they are asked in what manner it will be the most convenient to them to receive the prisoners.

If they postpone the evacuation of the different posts to the definitive treaty, we shall then be justified in doing the same with respect to prisoners. The question will then arise, whether, on principles of humanity, economy, and liberality, we ought not to restore the prisoners, at all events, without delay? Much may be said on both sides. I doubt the expedience of a total restoration of prisoners till they are willing to fix the epochs at which they will take leave of us. It will add considerably to their strength, and accidents, though improbable, may happen.

I confess, however, I am not clear in my opinion.

The provisional or preliminary treaty is ratified by us—for the greater caution.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

PHILADELPHIA, May 14, 1783.

SIR:

The President of Congress will of course have transmitted to your Excellency the plan lately adopted by Congress for funding the public debt.

This plan was framed to accommodate it to the objections of some of the States, but this spirit of accommodation will only serve to render it less efficient without making it more palatable. The opposition of the State of Rhode Island, for instance, is chiefly founded upon these two considerations: the merchants are opposed to any revenue from trade; and the State, depending almost wholly on commerce, wants to have credit for the amount of the duties.

Persuaded that the plan now proposed will have little more chance of success than a better one, and that, if agreed to by all the States, it will in a great measure fail in the execution, it received my negative. My principal objections were:

First, that it does not designate the funds (except the impost) on which the whole interest is to arise, and by which (selecting the capital articles of visible property) the collection would have been easy, the funds productive, and necessarily increasing with the increase of the country.

Second, that the duration of the funds is not coextensive with the debt, but limited to twenty-five years, though there is a moral certainty that in that period the principal will not by the present provision be fairly extinguished.

Third, that the nomination and appointment of the collectors of the revenue are to reside in the State, instead of at least the nomination being in the United States; the consequence of which will be that those States which have little interest in the funds, by having a small share of the public debt

due to their own citizens, will take care to appoint such persons as are least likely to collect the revenue.

The evils resulting from these defects will be that in many instances the objects of the revenues will be improperly chosen, and will consist of a multitude of little articles, which will, on experiment, prove insufficient; that for want of a vigorous collection in each State the revenue will be unproductive in many, and will fall chiefly upon those States which are governed by most liberal principles; that for want of an adequate security the evidences of the public debt will not be transferable for any thing like their value; that this not admitting an incorporation of the creditors in the nature of banks, will deprive the public of the benefit of an increased circulation, and of course will disable the people from paying the taxes for want of a sufficient medium.

I shall be happy to be mistaken in my apprehensions, but the experiment must determine.

I hope our State will consent to the plan proposed, because it is in her interests at all events to promote the payment of the public debt on Continental funds (independent of the general considerations of union and propriety).

I am much mistaken if the debts due from the United States to the citizens of the State of New York do not considerably exceed its proportion of the necessary funds; of course, it has an immediate interest that there should be a Continental provision for them. But there are superior motives that ought to operate in every State—the obligations of national faith, honor, and reputation.

Individuals have been already too long sacrificed to public convenience. It will be shocking, and, indeed, an eternal reproach to this country, if we begin the peaceable enjoyment of our independence by a violation of all the principles of honesty and true policy.

It is worthy of remark that at least four fifths of the domestic debt are due to the citizens of the States, from Pennsylvania, inclusively, northward.

P. S.—It is particularly interesting that the State should have a representation here. Not only matters are depending which require a full representation in Congress, and there is now a thin one, but those matters are of a nature so particularly interesting to our State, that we ought not to be without a voice in them. I wish two other gentlemen of the delegation may appear as soon as possible, for it would be very injurious for me to remain much longer here. Having no future views in public life, I owe it to myself without delay to enter upon the care of my private concerns in earnest.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

PHILADELPHIA, June 1, 1783.

SIR:

In my last letter to your Excellency I took occasion to mention that it was of great importance to the State at this time to have a representation here, as points in which, by its present situation, it is particularly interested are daily and will be daily agitated.

It is also of importance at this moment to the

United States (not only from general consideration, but) because we have a very thin representation in Congress, and are frequently unable to transact any of those matters which require nine States. I wish your Excellency would urge a couple of gentlemen to come on, as it becomes highly inconvenient to me to remain here, and as I have stayed the full time to be expected.

I observe with great regret the intemperate proceedings among the people in different parts of the State, in violation of a treaty, the faithful observance of which so deeply interests the United States.

Surely the State of New York, with its capital and its frontier posts (on which its important fur trade depends), in the hands of the British troops, ought to take care that nothing is done to furnish a pretext on the other side, even for delaying, much less for refusing, the execution of the treaty. We may imagine that the situation of Great Britain puts her under a necessity, at all events, of fulfilling her engagements and cultivating the good-will of this country.

This is, no doubt, her true policy: but when we feel that passion makes us depart from the dictates of reason; when we have seen that passion has had so much influence in the conduct of the British councils in the whole course of the war; when we recollect that those who govern them are men like ourselves, and alike subject to passions and resentments; when we reflect also that all the great men in England are not united in the liberal scheme of policy with respect to this country, and that in the anarchy

which prevails there is no knowing to whom the reins of government may be committed; when we recollect how little in a condition we are to force a compliance with our claims we ought certainly to be cautious in what manner we act, especially when we in particular have so much at stake, and should not openly provoke a breach of faith on the other side by setting the example.

An important distinction is not sufficiently attended to. The fifth article is recommendatory; the sixth, positive. There is no option on the part of the particular States as to any future confiscations, prosecutions, or injuries of any kind, to person, liberty, or property, on account of any thing done in the war. It is matter of discretion in the States whether they will comply with the recommendations contained in the fifth article; but no part of the sixth can be departed from by them without a direct breach of public faith and of the Confederation. The power of making treaties is exclusively lodged in Congress. That power includes whatever is essential to the termination of the war and to the preservation of the general safety. Indemnity to individuals in similar cases is a *usual* stipulation in treaties of peace, of which many precedents are to be produced.

Should it be said that the associations of the people, without legal authority, do not amount to a breach of the public faith, the answer is, if the government does not repress them, and prevent them having effect, it is as much a breach as a formal refusal to comply on its part. In the eye of a

foreign nation, if our engagements are broken, it is of no moment whether it is for the want of good intention in the government, or for want of power to restrain its subjects.

Suppose a violence committed by an American vessel on the vessel of another nation on the high seas, and after complaint made there is no redress given. Is not this a hostility against the injured nation which will justify reprisals?

But if I am not misinformed, there are violations going on in form of law. I am told that indictments continue to be brought under the former confiscation laws. A palpable infraction, if true, of the sixth article of the treaty, to which an immediate stop ought no doubt to be put.

It has been said by some men that the operation of this treaty is suspended till the definitive treaty; a plain subterfuge. Whatever is clearly expressed in the provisional or preliminary treaty is as binding from the moment it is made as the definitive treaty, which, in fact, only develops, explains, and fixes more precisely what may have been too generally expressed in the former.

Suppose the British should now send away not only the negroes, but all other property, and all the public records in their possession belonging to us, on the pretence above stated; should we not justly accuse them with breaking faith? Is this not already done in the case of the negroes who have been carried away, though founded upon a very different principle—a doubtful construction of the treaty, not a denial of its immediate operation.

In fine, is it our interest to advance this doctrine and to countenance the position that nothing is binding till the definitive treaty, when there are examples of *years* intervening between the preliminary and definitive treaties?

Sir Guy Carleton, in his correspondence, has appeared to consider the treaty as immediately obligatory, and it has been the policy which I have pursued to promote the same idea.

I am not, indeed, apprehensive of the renewal of the war, for peace is necessary to Great Britain. I think it also most probable her disposition to conciliate this country will outweigh the resentments which a breach of our engagements is calculated to inspire. But with a treaty which has exceeded the hopes of the most sanguine; which, in the articles of boundary and the fisheries, is even better than we asked; circumstanced, too, as this country is with respect to the means of making war, I think it the height of imprudence to run any risk. Great Britain, without recommencing hostilities, may evade parts of the treaty. She may keep possession of the frontier posts; she may obstruct the free enjoyment of the fisheries; she may be indisposed to such extensive concessions in matters of commerce as it is our interest to aim at. In all this she would find no opposition from any foreign power, and we are not in a condition to oblige her to any thing. If we imagine that France, obviously embarrassed herself in her finances, would renew the war to oblige Great Britain to the restoration of frontier posts, or to a compliance with the stipulations respecting the

fisheries (especially after a manifest breach of the treaty on our part), we speculate much at random. Observations might be made on the last article which would prove that it is not the policy of France to support our interest there. Are we prepared, for the mere gratification of our resentments, to put those great national objects to the hazard: to leave our Western frontier in a state of insecurity; to relinquish the fur-trade; and to abridge our pretensions to the fisheries? Do we think national character so light a thing as to be willing to sacrifice the public faith to individual animosity?

Let the case be fairly stated: Great Britain and America, two independent nations, at war. The former in possession of considerable posts and districts of territory belonging to the latter, and also of the means of obstructing certain commercial advantages in which it is deeply interested.

But it is not uncommon in treaties of peace for the *uti possidetis* to take place. Great Britain, however, in the present instance, stipulates to restore all our posts and territories in her possession. She even adds an extent not within our original claims, more than a compensation for a small part ceded in another quarter. She agrees to readmit us to a participation in the fisheries. What equivalent do we give for this? Congress are to recommend the restoration of property to those who have adhered to her, and expressly engage that no future injury shall be done them in person, liberty, or property. This is the sole condition, on our part, where there is not an immediate reciprocity (the recovery of debts and

liberation of prisoners being mutual, the former, indeed, only declaring what the rights of private faith, which all civilized nations hold sacred, would have declared without it), and stands as the single equivalent for all the restitutions and concessions to be made by Great Britain. Will it be honest in us to violate this condition, or will it be prudent to put it in competition with all the important matters to be performed on the other side?

Will foreign nations be willing to undertake any thing with us, or for us, when they find that the nature of our governments will allow no dependence to be placed upon our engagements? I have omitted saying any thing of the impolicy of inducing by our severity a great number of useful citizens, whose situations do not make them a proper object of resentment, to abandon the country to form settlements that will hereafter become our rivals, animated with a hatred to us which will descend to their posterity. Nothing, however, can be more unwise than to contribute, as we are doing, to people the shores and wilderness of Nova Scotia, a colony which, by its position, will become a competitor with us, among other things, in that branch of commerce on which our navigation and navy will essentially depend;—I mean the fisheries, in which I have no doubt the State of New York will hereafter have a considerable share.

To your Excellency I freely deliver my sentiments, because I am persuaded you cannot be a stranger to the force of these considerations. I fear not even to hazard them to the justice and good sense of those

whom I have the honor to represent. I esteem it my duty to do it, because the question is important to the interests of the State in its relation to the United States.

Those who consult only their passions might choose to construe what I say as too favorable to a set of men who have been the enemies of the public liberty, but those for whose esteem I am most concerned will acquit me of any personal consideration, and will perceive that I only urge the cause of national honor, safety, and advantage. We have assumed an independent station; we ought to feel and to act in a manner consistent with the dignity of that station.

I anxiously wish to see every prudent measure taken to prevent those combinations which will certainly disgrace us, if they do not involve us in other calamities. Whatever distinctions are judged necessary to be made in the cases of those persons who have been in opposition to the common cause, let them be made by legal authority, on a fair construction of the treaty, consistent with national faith and national honor.

[1] P. S.—Your Excellency will have been informed that Congress have instructed General Washington to garrison the frontier posts, when surrendered, with the three years' Continental troops. This is more for the interest of the State than to have them garrisoned at its particular expense, and I should wish that permanent provision might be made on the same principle. I wait to see whether any

[1] Thus divided in original in State Department.

Continental peace establishment for garrisons, etc., will take place, before I engage the consent of Congress to a separate provision.

I cannot forbear adding a word on the subject of money. The only reliance we now have for redeeming a large anticipation on the public credit, already made and making for the benefit of the army, is on the taxes coming in. The collection hitherto is out of all proportion to the demand. It is of vast consequence at this juncture that every thing possible should be done to forward it. I forbear entering into details which would be very striking upon this subject. I will only say that unless there is a serious exertion in the States, public credit must erelong receive another shock very disagreeable in its consequences.

TO JOHN DICKINSON [1]

1783.

SIR:

Having always entertained an esteem for you personally, I could not, without reluctance, yield to impressions that might weaken that sentiment, and it is with pain I find myself drawn by circumstances to animadvert upon the late message from the Executive Council to the Assembly of Pennsylvania relative to the mutiny, in a manner which may seem

[1] In the edition of 1850 this letter is headed "To Reed," presumably intending Joseph Reed, who was President of Pennsylvania in 1781. The original in the State Department has no address. The mutiny to which this refers was in 1783, the letter is dated 1783, and John Dickinson was President from 1782 to 1786. It seems obvious that this letter was written to the supreme magistrate of Pennsylvania, and if so it must have been to Dickinson.

to impeach the candor of those who were the authors of it.

But it will be impossible for persons who have read the report of the committee and the message of the Council, however inclined to make allowances for the force of involuntary bias, not to conclude that on one side or the other the facts have been wilfully discolored. I decline any attempt to set the public opinion right upon this subject, because, after all that can be said, the judgments of men will eventually be determined by personal and party prepossessions. So far as I am concerned, I persuade myself that those who are acquainted with me will place entire confidence in my fairness and veracity. I doubt not your Excellency's friends will be equally partial to you, and those of the Council to them. But though I should despair of rectifying or fixing the public opinion by an appeal to the public, and though I have seen too much of the ridicule thrown upon such appeals from men in official stations, and of the ill effect they have had upon the national character, not to be willing to sacrifice the desire of justifying myself to considerations of prudence and propriety, yet I cannot forbear indulging my feelings so far as to enter into a few explanations with your Excellency, submitting the justness of them to the testimony of your own mind.

As this is a mere private discussion, I address myself to your Excellency in particular; and the rather, as, from the style and manner of the message, I take it for granted you had the principal agency in it, and I shall consider, on the same grounds, the notes in

——[1] paper of the ——[1], as a comment on the report of the committee by yourself, in aid of the message.

I take up the matter individually, because I mean to treat it on a private footing, and because, though I do not acknowledge any peculiar responsibility, it happened to be my lot, as chairman, principally to conduct the conferences on the part of the committee.

I regard the whole of this business as a most unfortunate one, in which, probably, none of the actors will acquire great credit. I deplore it as tending to interrupt the harmony between Congress and a respectable, a meritorious member of the Union. Who were right or who were wrong is a question of less importance than how mutual irritations may be best healed. Whatever revives or continues the former, is to be regretted. I lament to be under an inducement to discuss circumstances that relate to it in the remotest degree. Nothing but an attack upon the ingenuousness of my conduct could have called me to it. Its prudence, either collectively or individually, would patiently have been consigned to the lash of censure and criticism, merited or unmerited.

Happily in the present case, the members of the committee have a strong ground, from which they cannot easily be forced. Apprehensive of misconception, I will not say of misrepresentation, they tried to render it impossible by written communications. The presumption, with impartial minds, cannot fail to be in favor of that side which gave so decisive a proof of its disposition to fairness

[1] These blanks are in the manuscript.

as to endeavor to put it out of its own power to misrepresent.

The professed scruples of the Council cannot be admitted to have any weight. Usage and the plainest rules of propriety will dictate that it never could have wounded the dignity or delicacy of the executive of any State to have given to a committee of Congress, appointed to confer on a subject of moment, a written answer to a request in writing after previous explanations. The fact stated speaks for itself. The consequences show that the precaution of the committee was well judged, and that it would have been well for the Council to have concurred.

In the present case it might be observed that there was, in the first instance, a written application from Congress to the Council, in the customary form of resolutions; and though a committee was authorized to confer and explain, a formal and authentic answer might reasonably have been expected by Congress, and, when desired by the committee, should have been understood as desired on their behalf.

There is an awkwardness in reasoning upon self-evident positions; but as the Council have, by their conduct in the first instance and by their message since, put forward a doubt upon the subject, and made it a point of importance, I shall be excused for examining it a little further. On what could the objection of the Council be founded? They say it had been unusual. Admitting the fact, was the mere novelty of the thing a sufficient reason against it? If there was no apparent inconvenience in making

a new precedent ; if, on the contrary, there was a manifest convenience in it, ought not such a punctilio to have given way to considerations of utility?

Was it derogatory to the dignity of the Council? Surely, if they communicate in writing with the executive servants of Congress, even those in subordinate stations, as is the practice of every day, and as is indispensable to the prosecution of public business, they might, at less expense of dignity, pursue the same mode with a part of that body itself.

The distinction taken by the Council in their message to the Assembly, respecting the responsibility of such executive officers, as not applicable to a committee, if it amounts to any thing, proves only this: That such officers ought in prudence to take greater precautions for their own justification than a committee of Congress need to do. It is not to be inferred, if a committee of Congress acting ministerially think it expedient to use circumspection, that those with whom they are transacting business can with propriety refuse to join them in that mode which is best adapted to precision and certainty.

But indeed the ground of distinction is erroneous. A committee of Congress act in a ministerial capacity, and are therefore responsible to the body to which they belong, as well as the servants of that body, though in a different manner. If it be said that they do not act ministerially, but stand in the place of Congress, then the Council, upon their own principles, ought to have complied with their request.

To diminish the exceptionableness of their refusal, it is true, as stated by the Council, that though they

said they could not *condescend* to do what the committee had asked, yet they declared themselves willing to *grant* an answer in writing if Congress should request it, and that they proposed that the committee should put their verbal answer in writing, to be afterward perused and examined by them.

The answer of the committee, as I doubt not your Excellency will recollect, was, as to the first point, that Congress in all probability would not make the request, having determined (as the Council had been already informed) not to resume their deliberations in this city until effective measures had been taken to suppress the mutiny, and should they assemble, would naturally feel a delicacy in requesting what had been denied to their committee. And as to the second point, that the Council having judged it inexpedient to give a written answer, the committee would content themselves with making the most accurate report in their power, relying upon the confidence of the body to which they belonged and upon the candor of the Council.

Your Excellency is too good a judge of human nature, as well as the force of language, not to have perceived at the time the effect which the refusal of the Council had upon my mind. I own it struck me as an uncandid reserve, or an unbecoming stateliness, and in either supposition a disrespect to the body of which the committee were members.

Though nothing enters less into my temper than an inclination to fetter business by punctilio, after the Council had discovered such overwhelming nicety I should have thought it a degradation to

my official character to have consented to their proposal.

The desire of self-justification is so natural that I should not have been surprised to have seen the transactions which are the subject of the Council's message receive a coloring favorable to their purpose; but I did not expect to see material facts either suppressed or denied.

The report made by the committee on the first interview with the Council was, I acknowledge, from memory, and therefore I admit a possibility of error; but so far as my memory can be relied on, the representation was just. And I am certain that there is a mistake in the insinuation that the circumstance of the message sent to Congress by the Board of Sergeants was not mentioned at all to the Council, for I have a note of it, taken immediately after the first conference subsequent to the mutiny. The affair, by the event of ——, having assumed a more serious aspect, I kept a regular minute of the proceedings, a summary of which made up our report to Congress, and which I shall annex at large to this letter for your Excellency's perusal.

The message entirely omits the declaration of the Council that ——[1]; and the note says that the Council only declared: "That they could not be sure that such another insult would produce those exertions."[2] The difference in this article is of

[1] This blank is in the manuscript.

[2] "The words, as reported by the committee to Congress, were: 'It,' *i. e.*, the arming of the citizens to suppress the mutineers, 'was not to be expected, merely from a repetition of the insult which had happened.' "—Note by Col. Pickering.

great importance. The declaration made so deep an impression at the time that almost the precise words remained in my memory. They were twice repeated, as well when we saw your Excellency alone in your own house in the morning, as when you delivered to us in the Council-chamber the determination of the Council.

Mr. Ellsworth [1] in half an hour afterwards repeated them to several members of Congress assembled at the President's house, and in a few hours from that time I committed them to writing. I cannot suppose your Excellency's recollection fails you in this particular, and I must pointedly appeal to your candor.

To show the inaccuracy with which the report of the committee was composed, it is observed in the notes with respect to that part which relates to the commission given by the mutineers to the officers whom they had chosen to represent them, that only two hours had intervened between that event and the conference with the Council, and that it was very improbable the knowledge of it could have so early reached the committee. It is added that none of the Council remembers to have heard a single syllable respecting it during the whole conference.

As to the argument drawn from the short interval between the delivery of the commission and the conference, it will be sufficient to say that the committee held a constant communication with General St. Clair, and that he kept a vigilant eye upon all the motions of the mutineers; that his access to them

[1] "Mr. Ellsworth was the other member of the committee. —T. P."

was easy; that the fact in question was a matter of immediate notoriety; that two hours were abundant time for a thing of that nature to be conveyed from the barracks to General St. Clair's quarters; and that one of the committee had actually seen and obtained the intelligence from him a little time before the interview with the Council commenced.

It is much more extraordinary that the Council should have been apprised of it so late, than that the committee should have known it so early. As to the memory of the Council, it is unfortunate it should have been so fallible as it is said to have been; but I would rather suppose "in the quick succession of circumstances" the matter had escaped their recollection, than that my minutes as well as my memory should have deceived me. I well recollect also that your Excellency, when it was mentioned, acknowledged that it rather contradicted the pacific appearance which the conduct of the troops in other respects wore.

These are the essential differences in point of fact between the report of the committee and the message of the Council; the whole complexion, indeed, of the one materially varies from the other; but the most common observer must have noticed how different an aspect the same facts will bear differently dressed and arranged. It was to avoid this we proposed to reduce them to writing, but as this has not been done, spectators must judge, from the situation of the parties and the course of the transactions, which side has given the justest relation.

I cannot, however, forbear remarking that I see

expressions of civility on the part of the committee, making a figure in the message very different from their genuine intention, being introduced in a manner that gives them the air of concessions in favor of the conduct of the Council. Your Excellency will certainly recollect that the committee were very remote from a concurrence in sentiment with the Council; and, though they did not presume to judge of the disposition of the citizens, strongly urged the expedience and necessity of calling out the militia, and facility of employing them with success against an unofficered and disorderly body of mutinous soldiers. It is true also that they acknowledged the candor with which the Council exposed to them what they deemed the temper of their citizens and their own difficulties and embarrassments, which were, no doubt, delineated with great energy of language and display of circumstances, but they certainly never admitted the candor of refusing an answer in writing, which was a part of the *business* transacted with the Council; nor did they *withdraw* without giving an intelligible intimation of their sense of this proceeding.

I was also surprised to see any part of the private and confidential conversation I had with your Excellency ushered into the message from the Council, and moulded into such a shape as to imply, by an obvious construction, an approbation of their reasons. Your Excellency will admit the following state of this transaction to be a just one.

I waited upon the Council to correct a piece of information I had given them respecting ammunition,

but even this is misstated, as will be seen by my minutes. Having done this, my official business ended, when I was taken aside by your Excellency, and a conversation passed in declared confidence. You informed me that a meeting of the militia officers was then holding, and in consultation with the Council about eventual measures (in consequence, as I conjectured, of a communication to you the preceding evening from the delegates of the State, of the intention of Congress to remove from the city in case they did not receive satisfactory assurances of support). You added that you hoped nothing would be precipitated, but that proper allowance would be made for the situation of the Council.

I understood your observations with reference to the departure of Congress, and replied to this effect: That I viewed the departure of Congress as a delicate measure, including consequences important to the national character abroad, and critical with respect to the State of Pennsylvania, and, in particular, the city of Philadelphia; that the triumph of a handful of mutinous soldiers, permitted in a place which is considered as the capital of America, to surround and, in fact, imprison Congress, without the least effort on the part of the citizens to uphold their dignity and authority, so as to oblige them to remove from the place which had been their residence during the Revolution, would, it was to be feared, be viewed at a distance as a general disaffection of the citizens to the Federal Government, might discredit its negotiations, and affect the national interests; that at

home it might give a deep wound to the reputation of Pennsylvania, might draw upon it the resentments of the other States, and sow discord between Congress and the State; that the removal of Congress would probably bring the affair to a crisis, and, by convincing the mutineers that extremities were intended, would either intimidate them into a submission, or determine them to immediate excesses; that, impressed with these considerations, and still hoping, notwithstanding some appearances to the contrary, that the mutineers might be sincere in their professions of submission, or that the Council, on further examination, would find it in their power to act with vigor, I had declined giving my assent to a report in writing, which would necessarily be followed by the departure of Congress; that though the committee had no discretion by the powers under which they acted, but were bound, by the tenor of their instructions, the moment they did not receive "satisfactory assurances of prompt and adequate exertions on the part of the State for supporting the public authority," to advise the adjournment of Congress to Trenton or Princeton, and I therefore considered the delay of this advice as at their extreme peril; yet, as to myself, I should persist in it till the result of the present consultation with the militia officers, or till some new circumstance should turn up to explain the designs of the mutineers; and in pursuing this line of conduct I should counteract the sense of some gentlemen whose feelings upon the occasion were keen, and the opinions of others who thought the situation of Congress, under the existing

circumstances, extremely awkward, precarious, and unjustifiable to their constituents.

Your Excellency approved my intention, wished for time, and promised if any new resolution should be taken to give me immediate notice of it.

The meeting of the militia officers dissolved; I heard nothing from your Excellency. General St. Clair, about two in the afternoon, informed the committee that the officers appointed by the soldiers to manage their business had, in the first instance, refused to give him an account of their transactions, the which was only extracted from them by a peremptory demand. He mentioned to us the instructions they had received from the soldiers, which contained faint and affected concessions, mixed with new and inadmissible demands.

The whole affair wore the complexion of collusion between the officers of the committee and the soldiery, and of a mere amusement on their part until they could gain fresh strength and execute their project, whatever it might be, with greater advantage.

This behavior of the officers gave the affair a new and more serious aspect, and overcame my opposition to the report. Mr. Peters, on hearing the relation of General St. Clair, declared at once that he thought the committee had then no alternative; at least, what he said was understood in this sense by General St. Clair, Mr. Ellsworth, and myself. If I am not much mistaken, General St. Clair also expressed his opinion that Congress were unsafe in the city.

The ideas I suggested to your Excellency, in the

conversation I have mentioned, were substantially expressed to several members of Congress as the motives of my delay, and particularly, I recollect, to Mr. Madison, with these observations in addition: That though I was fully convinced Congress, under an immediate view of circumstances, would in reality be justified in withdrawing from a place where such an outrage to government had been with impunity perpetrated by a body of armed mutineers, still, for several days, in complete command of the city, and where either the feebleness of public councils or the indisposition of the citizens afforded no assurance of protection and support, yet, as the opinions of men would be governed by events, and as the most probable event was that the removal of Congress, announcing decisive measures of coercion to the soldiery, would awe them into submission, there was great danger that the reputation of Congress would suffer by the easy termination of the business, and that they would be accused of levity, timidity, or rashness.

Though not within the scope of my original intention, I will indulge in a few additional reflections on this subject. I am sensible that the Council, in some respects, stand upon advantageous ground in this discussion. Congress left the city because they had no forces at hand, no jurisdiction over the militia, and no assurances of effectual support from those who had. The Council, as the executive of the State, were necessitated to remain on the spot. Soon after Congress removed, the mutineers were deserted by their leaders and surrendered at discretion.

The multitude will be very apt to conclude that the affair was of trifling consequence; that it vanished under its own insignificance; that Congress took up the matter in too high a tone of authority; that they discovered a prudish nicety and irritability about their own dignity; that the Council were more temperate, more humane, and possessed of greater foresight.

The bias in favor of an injured army, the propensity of the human mind to lean to the speciousness of professed humanity rather than to the necessary harshness of authority, the vague and imperfect notions of what is due to public authority in an infant popular government, and the insinuating plausibility of a well-constructed *message*, will all contribute to that conclusion.

But let us suppose an impartial man of sense, well acquainted with facts, to form an argument upon the subject. It appears to me he might naturally fall into this train of combination.

It is a well-known fact that, from the necessities of the war, or the delinquencies of the several States, Congress were not enabled to comply with their engagements to the army, which, after a glorious and successful struggle for their country, much suffering, exemplary patience, and signal desert, they were compelled, by the irresistible dictates of an empty treasury and a ruined credit, to disband, after having given strong indications of their discontent and resentment of the public neglect. A large part of the army suffer themselves to be patiently dismissed; a particular corps of four or five hundred men, sta-

tioned in the place where Congress reside, refuse to accept their discharges but on certain specified conditions.

They even go further, and, stimulated by their injuries, or encouraged and misled by designing persons, are emboldened to send a threatening message to Congress, declaring to them that unless they would do them justice immediately they would find means of redress for themselves. Measures are indirectly taken to appease this disorder and give the discontented soldiers as much satisfaction as the situation of things will permit. Shortly after, accounts are received that another corps, at —— miles' distance, have also mutinied, and that a part of them, to the number of about eighty men, are on their march to join those who had already discovered so refractory a disposition. A committee of Congress is immediately appointed to confer with the executive of the State on the measures proper to be pursued in this exigency. That committee in the first instance suggest to the Council the expedience of calling out a body of militia to intercept the detachment of mutineers on its march and represent the danger of the progress of the spirit of mutiny and of future outrages should those on their march be suffered without molestation, to join a more numerous corps in the same temper with themselves.

The Council urge a variety of difficulties: the shortness of the time to collect the militia before the mutineers would arrive, the reluctance with which the citizens would obey a call against men whom they consider as meritorious, and injured,

and the like. The committee perceiving the unwillingness of the Council to employ the militia, desist from pressing, and recur to expedients. The day after, the mutineers march in triumph into the city, and unite themselves with those who are already there; and the following day, the whole body assemble in arms, throw off all obedience to their officers, and, in open defiance of government, march to the place which is the usual seat of Congress and the Council of the State, while both are actually sitting; surround it with guards, and send a message to the Council, demanding authority to appoint, themselves, officers to command them, with absolute discretion to take such measures as those officers should think proper to redress their grievances, accompanied with a threat that, if there was not a compliance in twenty minutes, they would let in an injured soldiery upon them, and abide the consequence.

The members of Congress who were at the time assembled, request General St. Clair, who happened to be present, to take such measures as he should judge expedient, without committing the honor of government, to divert the storm, and induce the troops to return to their quarters without perpetrating acts of violence. General St. Clair, in concert with the Council, grants the mutineers permission to elect, out of officers then or formerly in commission, such as they should confide in, to represent their grievances to the Council, with a promise that the Council would confer with the persons elected for that purpose. Having obtained this

promise, the mutineers return to their quarters, in military parade, and continue in open defiance of government.

The concession made was a happy compromise between an attention to dignity and a prudent regard to safety.

Men who had dared to carry their insolence to such an extreme, and who saw no opposition to their outrages, were not to be expected to retreat without an appearance, at least, of gratifying their demands. The slightest accident were sufficient to prompt men in such a temper and situation to tragical excesses.

But however it might become the delicacy of government not to depart from the promise it had given, it was its duty to provide effectually against a repetition of such outrages, and to put itself in a situation to give, instead of receiving, the law, and to manifest that its compliance was not the effect of necessity, but of choice.

This was not to be considered as the disorderly riot of an unarmed mob, but as the deliberate mutiny of an incensed soldiery, carried to the utmost point of outrage short of assassination. The licentiousness of an army is to be dreaded in every government, but in a republic it is more particularly to be restrained; and when directed against the civil authority, to be checked with energy and punished with severity. The merits and sufferings of the troops might be a proper motive for mitigating punishment, when it was in the power of the government to inflict it; but it was no reason for relaxing in the measures necessary to put itself in that

situation. Its authority was first to be vindicated, and then its clemency to be displayed.

The rights of government are as essential to be defended as the rights of individuals. The security of the one is inseparable from that of the other. And, indeed, in every new government, especially of the popular kind, the great danger is that public authority will not be sufficiently respected.

But upon this occasion there were more particular reasons for decision.

Congress knew there were within two or three days' march of the city a more considerable body of the same corps, part of which had mutinied and come to town, and had been the chief actors in the late disorder; that those men had with difficulty been kept, by the exertions of their officers, from joining the insurgents in the first instance; that there was another corps in their neighborhood which, a little time before, had also discovered symptoms of mutiny; that a considerable part of the same line which were in mutiny in town was every moment expected to arrive from the southward, and there was the greatest reason to conclude would be infected with the same spirit on their arrival, as had presently happened in the case of a small detachment which had joined a few days before; that there were besides large numbers of disbanded soldiers scattered through the country, in want, and who had not yet had time to settle down to any occupation, and exchange their military for private habits; that some of these were really coming in and adding themselves to the revolters; that an extensive

accession of strength might be gained from these different quarters, and that there were all the sympathies of like common wrongs, distresses, and resentments to bring them together and to unite them in one cause. The partial success of those who had already made an experiment would be a strong encouragement to others, the rather as the whole line had formerly mutinied, not only with impunity, but with advantage to themselves.

In this state of things, decision was most compatible with the safety of the community, as well as the dignity of government. Though no general convulsion might be to be apprehended, serious mischiefs might attend the progress of the disorder. Indeed it would have been meanness to have negotiated and temporized with an armed banditti of four or five hundred men, who, in any other situation than surrounding a defenceless senate, could only become formidable by being feared. This was not an insurrection of a whole people; it was not an army, with their officers at their head, demanding the justice of their country—either of which might have made caution and concession respectable; it was a handful of mutinous soldiers, who had equally violated the laws of discipline and rights of public authority.

Congress therefore wisely resolve that "it is necessary that effectual measures be immediately taken for supporting the public authority," and call upon the State in which they reside for assistance of its militia, at the same time that they send orders for the march of a body of regular forces as an eventual resource.

There was a propriety in calling for the aid of the militia, in the first place, for different reasons. Civil government may always, with more peculiar propriety, resort to the aid of the citizens to repel military insults or encroachments.

'T is there, it ought to be supposed, where it may seek its surest dependence, especially in a democracy which is the creature of the people. The citizens of each State are, in an aggregate light, the citizens of the United States, and bound as much to support the representatives of the whole as their own immediate representatives. The insult was not to Congress personally; it was to the government, to public authority in general, and was very properly put upon that footing. The regular forces which Congress could command were at a great distance, and could not, but in a length of time, be brought to effectuate their purpose. The disorder continued to exist on the spot where they were, was likely to increase by delay, and might be productive of sudden and mischievous effects by being neglected.

The city and the bank were in immediate danger of being rifled, and perhaps of suffering other calamities. The citizens, therefore, were the proper persons to make the first exertion.

The objection that these were not the objects of the care of Congress, can only serve to mislead the vulgar. The peace and safety of the place which was the immediate residence of Congress, *endangered, too, by the troops of the United States*, demanded their interposition. The President of the State of Pennsylvania was himself of this opinion, having

declared to a member of that body, that, as their troops were the offenders, it was proper for them to declare the necessity of calling out the militia, as a previous step to its being done.

Nor is there more weight in the supposition that the danger was inconsiderable, and that, from the pacific appearances of the troops, it was to be expected the disorder would subside of itself. The facts were, that the troops still continued in a state of mutiny, had made no submissions nor offered any, and that they effected to negotiate with their arms in their hands.

A band of mutinous soldiers in such a situation, uncontrolled, and elated with their own power, was not to be trusted.

The most sudden vicissitudes and contradictory changes were to be expected, and a fit of intoxication was sufficient at any moment, with men who had already gone such length, to make the city a scene of plunder and massacre. It was the height of rashness to leave the city exposed to the bare possibility of such mischiefs.

The only question, in this view, is, whether there was greater danger to the city in attempting their reduction by force, than in endeavoring by palliatives to bring them to a sense of duty? It has been urged, and appeared to have operated strongly upon the minds of the Council,[1] that the soldiers being already embodied, accustomed to arms, and ready

[1] Your Excellency will recollect that in our private conversation you urged this consideration, and appealed to my military experience, and that I made substantially the observations which follow.

to act at a moment's warning, it would be extremely hazardous to attempt to collect the citizens to subdue them, as the mutineers might have taken advantage of the first confusion incident to the measure to do a great deal of mischief before this militia could have assembled in equal or superior force.

It is not to be denied that a small body of disciplined troops, headed and lead by their officers, with a plan of conduct, could have effected a great deal in similar circumstances; but it is equally certain that nothing can be more contemptible than a body of men used to be commanded and to obey, when deprived of the example and direction of their officers. They are infinitely less to be dreaded than an equal number of men who have never been broken to command, nor exchanged their natural courage for that artificial kind which is the effect of discipline and habit. Soldiers transfer their confidence from themselves to their officers, face danger by the force of example, the dread of punishment, and the sense of necessity. Take away these inducements and leave them to themselves, they are no longer resolute than till they are opposed.

In the present case it was to be relied upon that the appearance of opposition would instantly bring the mutineers to a sense of their insignificance and to submission. Conscious of their weakness from the smallness of their numbers, in a populous city and in the midst of a populous country, awed by the consequences of resisting government by arms, and confounded by the want of proper leaders and proper direction, the common soldiers would have

thought of nothing but making their peace by the sacrifice of those who had been the authors of their misconduct.

The idea, therefore, of coercion was the safest and most prudent, for more was to be apprehended from leaving them to their own passions than from attempting to control them by force. It will be seen, by and by, how far the events, justly appreciated, correspond with this reasoning.

Congress were not only right in adopting measures of coercion, but they were also right in resolving to change their situation if proper exertions were not made by the particular government and citizens of the place where they resided. The want of such exertions would evince some defect, no matter where, that would prove they ought to have no confidence in their situation. They were, to all intents and purposes, in the power of a lawless, armed banditti, enraged, whether justly or not, against them. However they might have had a right to expose their own persons to insult and outrage, they had no right to expose the character of representatives, or the dignity of the States they represented, or of the Union. It was plain they could not with propriety, in such a state of things, proceed in their deliberations where they were, and it was right they should repair to a place where they could do it. It was far from impossible that the mutineers might have been induced to seize their persons as hostages for their own security, as well as with a hope of extorting concessions. Had such an event taken place the whole country would have exclaimed: Why did not Con-

gress withdraw from a place where they found they could not be assured of support; where the government was so feeble, or the citizens so indisposed, as to suffer three or four hundred mutinous soldiers to violate, with impunity, the authority of the United States and of their own State?

When they resolved to depart, on the want of adequate exertions, they had reason to doubt their being made, from the disinclination shown by the Council to call out the militia in the first instance; and when they did actually depart they were informed by the Council that the efforts of the citizens were not to be looked for, even from a repetition of the outrage which had already happened, and it was to be doubted what measure of outrage would produce them. They had also convincing proof that the mutiny was more serious than it had even at first appeared, by the participation of some of the officers.

To throw the blame of harshness and precipitancy upon Congress, it is said that their dignity was only *accidentally* and *undesignedly* offended. Much stress has been laid upon the message from the soldiery being directed to the Council, and not to them. All this, however, is very immaterial to the real merits of the question. Whatever might have been the first intention of the mutineers in this particular act, whether it proceeded from artifice or confusion of ideas, the indignity to Congress was the same. They knew that Congress customarily held their deliberations at the State House; and if it even be admitted that they knew Saturday to be a day of usual recess,

which, perhaps, is not altogether probable, when they came to the place they saw and knew Congress to be assembled there. They did not desist in consequence of this, but proceeded to station their guards and execute their purposes. Members of Congress went out to them, remonstrated with them, represented the danger of their proceedings to themselves, and desired them to withdraw; but they persisted till they obtained what they supposed a part of their object. A majority of the same persons had, some days before, sent a message, almost equally exceptionable, to Congress; and at the time they scarcely spoke of any other body than Congress, who, indeed, may naturally be supposed to have been the main object of their resentments: for Congress, having always appeared to the soldiery to be the body who contracted with them, and who had broken faith with them, it is not to be supposed they were capable of investigating the remote causes of the failures, so as to transfer the odium from Congress to the State.

But the substantial thing to be considered in this question is the violation of public authority. It cannot be disputed that the mutiny of troops is a violation of that authority to which they owe obedience. This was, in the present case, aggravated to a high degree of atrociousness by the gross insult to the government of Pennsylvania, in the face of Congress and in defiance of their displeasure. It was further aggravated by continuing in that condition for a series of time.

The reasons have been assigned that made it

incumbent upon Congress to interpose; and when they called upon the State of Pennsylvania, not only to vindicate its own rights, but to support their authority, the declining a compliance was a breach of the Confederation and of the duty which the State of Pennsylvania owed to the United States. The best apology for the government of Pennsylvania, in this case, is that they could not command the services of their citizens. But so improper a disposition in the citizens, if admitted, must operate as an additional justification to Congress in their removal.

The subsequent events, justly appreciated, illustrate the propriety of their conduct. The mutineers did not make voluntary submissions in consequence of negotiation, persuasion, or conviction. They did not submit till after Congress had left the city, publishing their intentions of coercion; till after there had been an *actual call* upon the militia; till their leaders and instigators, alarmed by the approach of force and the fear of being betrayed by the men, fled. They were reduced by coercion, not overcome by mildness.

It appears, too, that while they were professing repentance and a return to their duty, they were tampering with the troops at Yorktown and Lancaster to increase their strength, and that two officers, at least, were concerned in the mutiny, who, by their letters since, have confessed that some project of importance was in contemplation.

The call for the militia was made the day after it had been pronounced ineligible by the Council. There could have been little change in that time,

either in the temper or preparations of the citizens. The truth is, that the departure of Congress brought the matter to a crisis, and that the Council were compelled by necessity to do what they ought to have done before through choice.

It is to be lamented they did not, by an earlier decision, prevent the necessity of Congress taking a step which may have many disagreeable consequences. They then would * * *

[The rest of the manuscript is lacking.]

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

PRINCETOWN, June 29, 1783

DEAR SIR:

I am informed that among other disagreeable things said about the removal of Congress from Philadelphia, it is insinuated that it was a contrivance of some members to get them out of the State of Pennsylvania into one of those to which they belonged; and I am told that this insinuation has been pointed at me in particular.

Though I am persuaded that all disinterested persons will justify Congress in quitting a place where they were told they were not to expect support (for the conduct of the Council amounted to that), yet I am unwilling to be held up as having had an extraordinary agency in the measure for interested purposes when the fact is directly the reverse. As you were a witness to my conduct and opinions through the whole of the transaction, I am induced to trouble you for your testimony upon this

occasion. I do not mean to make a public use of it, but, through my friends, to vindicate myself from the imputations I have mentioned.

I will therefore request your answers to the following questions:

Did that part of the resolutions which related to the removal of Congress originate with me or not?

Did I, as a member of the committee, appear to press the departure, or did I not rather manifest a strong disposition to postpone that event as long as possible, even against the general current of opinion?

I wish you to be as particular and full in your answer as your memory will permit. I think you will recollect that my idea was clearly this: That the mutiny ought not to be terminated by negociation; that Congress were justifiable in leaving a place where they did not receive the support which they had a right to expect, but, as their removal was a measure of a critical and delicate nature, might have an ill appearance in Europe, and might, from events, be susceptible of an unfavorable interpretation in this country, it was prudent to delay it till its necessity became apparent; not only till it was manifest there would be no change in the spirit which seemed to actuate the Council, but till it was evident complete submission was not to be expected from the troops; that to give full time for this it would be proper to delay the departure of Congress till the latest period which would be compatible with the idea of meeting at Trenton or Princeton on Thursday—perhaps even till Thursday morning.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

PHILADELPHIA, July 6, 1783.

DEAR SIR:

On my arrival in this city I am more convinced than I was of the necessity of giving a just state of fact to the public. The current runs strongly against Congress, and in a great measure for want of information. When facts are explained they make an impression, and incline to conclusions more favorable to us.

I have no copy of the reports in my possession, which puts it out of my power to publish them. Will you procure and send me one without loss of time? Without appearing, I intend to give them to the public with some additional explanations. This done with moderation will, no doubt, have a good effect.

The prevailing idea is, that the actors in the removal of Congress were influenced by the desire of getting them out of the city, and the generality of the remainder by timidity—some say passion. Few give a more favorable interpretation.

I will thank you in your letter to me to answer the following question:

What appeared to be my ideas and disposition respecting the removal of Congress? Did I appear to wish to hasten it, or did I not rather show a strong disposition to procrastinate it?

I will be obliged to you in answering this question to do it fully. I do not intend to make any public use of it, but through my friends to vindicate myself from the insinuation I have mentioned, and in that to confute the supposition that the motive assigned

did actuate the members on whom it fell to be more particularly active.

TO MRS. HAMILTON

PHILADELPHIA, July 22, 1783.

I wrote you, my beloved Eliza, by the last post, which I hope will not meet with the fate that many others of my letters must have met with. I count upon setting out to see you in four days, but I have been so frequently disappointed by unforeseen events, that I shall not be without apprehensions of being detained, till I have begun my journey. The members of Congress are very pressing with me not to go away at this time, as the House is thin, and as the definitive treaty is momently expected.

Tell your father that Mr. Rivington,[1] in a letter to the South Carolina delegates, has given information, coming to him from Admiral Arbuthnot, that the *Mercury* frigate is arrived at New York with the definitive treaty, and that the city was to be evacuated yesterday by the treaty.

I am strongly urged to stay a few days for the ratification of the treaty; at all events, however, I will not be long absent.

I give you joy of the happy conclusion of this important work in which your country has been engaged. Now, in a very short time, I hope we shall be happily settled in New York.

My love to your father. Kiss my boy a thousand times.

[1] Probably the well known New York publisher of that name.

TO JOHN JAY

PHILADELPHIA, July 25, 1783.

DEAR SIR:

Though I have not performed my promise of writing to you which I made you when you left this country, yet I have not the less interested myself in your welfare and success. I have been witness with pleasure to every event which has had a tendency to advance you in the esteem of your country, and I may assure you with sincerity that it is as high as you could possibly wish. All have united in the warmest approbation of your conduct. I cannot forbear telling you this, because my situation has given me access to the truth, and I gratify my friendship for you in communicating what cannot fail to gratify your sensibility.

The peace, which exceeds in the goodness of its terms the expectations of the most sanguine, does the highest honor to those who made it. It is the more agreeable, as the time was come when thinking men began to be seriously alarmed at the internal embarrassments and exhausted state of this country. The New England people talk of making you an annual fish-offering, as an acknowledgment of your exertions for the participation of the fisheries. We have now happily concluded the great work of independence, but much remains to be done to reap the fruits of it. Our prospects are not flattering. Every day proves the inefficiency of the present Confederation; yet the common danger being removed, we are receding instead of advancing in a disposition to amend its defects. The road to popularity in each

State is to inspire jealousies of the power of Congress, though nothing can be more apparent than that they have no power; and that for the want of it, the resources of the country during the war could not be drawn out, and we at this moment experience all the mischiefs of a bankrupt and ruined credit. It is to be hoped that when prejudice and folly have run themselves out of breath, we may return to reason and correct our errors. After having served in the field during the war, I have been making a short apprenticeship in Congress, but the evacuation of New York approaching, I am preparing to take leave of public life, to enter into the practice of the law. Your country will continue to demand your services abroad. I beg you to present me most respectfully to Mrs. Jay, and to be assured, etc.[1]

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

PRINCETON, July 27, 1783.

SIR:

A few days since I was honored with your Excellency's letter of the ——; and was glad to find your ideas on the subject corresponded with mine.

As I shall, in a day or two, take leave of Congress, I think it my duty to give my opinion to the Legislature on a matter of importance to the State, which has been long depending, and is still without a prospect of termination in the train in which it has been placed. I mean the affair of the Grants.[2] It is

[1] Reprinted from W. Jay's *Life of John Jay*, ii., 122.

[2] This refers to the dispute as to the territory now forming the State of Vermont.

hazardous to pass a positive judgment on what will happen in a body so mutable as that of Congress; but, from all I have seen, I have come to a settled opinion that no determination will be taken and executed by them in any other manner than in that prescribed by the Confederation. There is always such a diversity of views and interests, so many compromises to be made between different States, that, in a question of this nature, the embarrassments of which have been increased by the steps that have preceded, and in which the passions of the opposite sides have taken a warm part, decision must be the result of necessity. While Congress have a discretion, they will procrastinate; when they are bound by the Constitution, they must proceed.

It is therefore my opinion that it will be advisable for the Legislature, when they meet, to review the question, and either to relinquish their pretensions to the country in dispute, or to instruct their delegates, if a decision is not had within a limited time, to declare the submission to Congress revoked, and to institute a claim according to the principles of the Confederation.

It would be out of my province to discuss which side of the alternate ought in policy to prevail, but I will take the liberty to observe, that if the last should be preferred, it would be expedient to remove every motive of opposition from private claims, not only by confirming in their full latitude, previous to the trial, the possessions of the original settlers, but even the grants of the usurped government. It

may happen that it will be eventually necessary to employ force, and in this case it would be of great importance that neither the inhabitants of the Grants, nor powerful individuals in other States, should find their private interest in contradiction to that of the State. This has already had great influence in counteracting our wishes, would continue to throw impediments in the way of ulterior measures, and might at last kindle a serious flame between the States.

I communicated to your Excellency, in a former letter, that I had declined pressing the application of the Legislature to Congress respecting the State troops for garrisoning the frontier posts, because temporary provision had been made in another way which would save the State the immediate expense, and because there was a prospect of some general provision for the defence of the frontiers on a Continental establishment, which was to be preferred on every account. A report for this purpose is now before Congress, but the thinness of representation has for some time retarded, and still retards, its consideration.

The definitive treaty is not yet arrived, but from accounts which, though not official, appear to deserve credit, it may be daily expected. A gentleman known and confided in, has arrived at Philadelphia, who informs that he saw a letter from Dr. Franklin to Mr. Barkeley, telling him that the definitive treaties were signed the 27th of May between all the parties; that New York was to be evacuated in six months from the ratification of the prelimi-

naries in Europe, which will be the 12th or 15th of next month.

As it is not my intention to return to Congress, I take this opportunity to make my respectful acknowledgements to the Legislature for the honorable mark of their confidence conferred upon me by having chosen me to represent the State in that body. I shall be happy if my conduct has been agreeable to them.

TO WASHINGTON

ALBANY, September 30, 1783.

DEAR SIR:

As I flatter myself I may indulge a consciousness that my services have been of some value to the public, at least enough to merit the small compensation I wish, I will make no apology to your Excellency for conveying, through you, that wish to Congress. You are able to inform them, if they wish information, in what degree I may have been useful; and I have entire confidence that you will do me justice.

In a letter which I wrote to you several months ago, I intimated that it might be in your power to contribute to the establishment of our Federal Union upon a more solid basis. I have never since explained myself. At the time, I was in hopes Congress might have been induced to take a decisive ground; to inform their constituents of the imperfections of the present system, and of the impossibility of conducting the public affairs, with honor to

themselves and advantage to the community, with powers so disproportioned to their responsibility; and, having done this, in a full and forcible manner, to adjourn the moment the definitive treaty was ratified. In retiring at the same juncture, I wished you, in a solemn manner, to declare to the people your intended retreat from public concerns, your opinion of the present government, and of the absolute necessity of a change.

Before I left Congress I despaired of the first, and your circular-letter to the States had anticipated the last. I trust it will not be without effect, though I am persuaded it would have had more, combined with what I have mentioned. At all events, without compliment, sir, it will do you honor with the sensible and well-meaning; and, ultimately, it is to be hoped, with the people at large, when the present epidemic frenzy has subsided.

Mrs. Hamilton presents her compliments to Mrs. Washington.

I beg the favor of your Excellency to forward the enclosed to General Greene.

TO WASHINGTON

ALBANY, September 30, 1783.

SIR:

I think I may address the subject of this letter to your Excellency with more propriety than to any other person, as it is purely of a military nature, as you are best acquainted with my services as an officer, and as you are now engaged in assisting to

form the arrangements for the future peace establishment.

Your Excellency knows that in March, '82, I relinquished all claim to any future compensation for my services, either during the residue of the war, or after its conclusion—simply retaining my rank. On this foundation I build a hope that I may be permitted to preserve my rank, on the peace establishment, without emoluments and unattached to any corps—as an honorary reward for the time I have devoted to the public. As I may hereafter travel, I may find it an agreeable circumstance to appear in the character I have supported in the Revolution.

I rest my claim solely on the sacrifice I have made, because I have no reason to believe that my services have appeared of any value to Congress, as they declined giving them any marks of their notice, on an occasion which appeared to my friends to entitle me to it, as well by the common practice of sovereigns as by the particular practice of this country in repeated instances.

Your Excellency will recollect that it was my lot at York Town to command, as senior officer, a successful attack upon one of the enemy's redoubts; that the officer who acted in a similar capacity in another attack, made at the same time, by the French troops, has been handsomely distinguished in consequence of it by the government to which he belongs; and that there are several examples among us where Congress have bestowed honors upon actions, perhaps not more useful, nor apparently more hazardous.

These observations are inapplicable to the present Congress, further than as they may possibly furnish an additional motive to a compliance with my wish.

The only thing I ask of your Excellency is, that my application may come into view in the course of the consultations on the peace establishment.

TO GOVERNOR CLINTON

ALBANY, October 3, 1783.

SIR:

I have lately received, from Messrs. Duane and L'Hommedieu, an extract of a letter from your Excellency to the delegates, of the 23d of August last, requesting "a particular detail of the motives which influenced the determination of Congress" respecting the application of the Legislature to have their State troops released from Continental pay, for the purpose of garrisoning the frontier posts.

In my letters to your Excellency of the first of June and twenty-seventh of July, which were intended to be official, I summarily informed you that Congress had made temporary provision for garrisoning the frontier posts, and that a plan was under deliberation relative to a peace establishment, which would, of course, embrace that object permanently; that such temporary provision being made at the common expense, and a general plan being under consideration for the future, I had declined pressing a compliance with the application of the Legislature; conceiving it to be more for the interest of the State

that the expense should be jointly borne, than that it should fall exclusively upon itself.

I did not enter into a more full detail upon the subject, because the business continued, to the time I left Congress, in an undecided state, and it was impossible to judge what views would finally prevail.

The concurrent resolutions of the two Houses had been, immediately on their receipt, referred to a committee appointed to report on a peace establishment, who had suspended their report on these resolutions until it should appear what would be the fate of a general plan which had been submitted.

As to the motives that influenced Congress in making the provision they did make, rather than immediately assenting to the application of the State, as far as I was able to collect them, they were these: The opinions of many were unsettled as to the most eligible mode of providing for the security of the frontiers consistent with the Constitution, as well with respect to the general policy of the Union, as to considerations of justice to those States whose frontiers were more immediately exposed. A considerable part of the House appeared to think, from reasons of a very cogent nature, that the well-being of the Union required a federal provision for the security of the different parts, and that it would be a great hardship to individual States peculiarly circumstanced to throw the whole burthen of expense upon them by recurring to separate provisions in a matter, the benefit of which would be immediately shared by their neighbors, and ultimately by the Union at large; that indeed it was not probable

particular States would be either able or, *upon experiment*, willing to make competent provision at their separate expense, and that the principle might eventually excite jealousies between the States unfriendly to the common tranquillity.

I freely confess I was one who held this opinion.

Questions naturally arose as to the true construction of the articles of Confederation upon this head; questions as delicate, as interesting, and as difficult of solution.

On one hand it was doubted whether Congress were authorized by the Confederation to proceed upon the idea of a federal provision; on the other, it was perceived that such a contrary construction would be dangerous to the Union, including, among other inconveniences, this consequence, that the United States, in Congress, cannot raise a single regiment, nor equip a single ship, for the general defence, till after the declaration of war, or an actual commencement of hostilities.

In this dilemma, on an important constitutional question, other urgent matters depending before Congress, and the advanced season requiring a determination upon the mode of securing the Western posts in case of a surrender this fall, all sides of the House concurred in making a temporary provision, in the manner which has been communicated.

My apprehension of the views of the Legislature was simply this: That, looking forward to a surrender of the posts, and conceiving, from some expressions in the articles of Confederation, that separate provision was to be made for the frontier

garrisons, they had thought it expedient to apply the troops already on foot to that purpose, and to propose to Congress to give their sanction to it.

Under this apprehension, reflecting besides, that those troops were engaged only for a short period, upon a very improper establishment to continue, on account of the enormous pay to the private men, and that the expense which is now shared by all, and which would have fallen solely upon the State had the application been complied with, would probably be at the rate of nearly eighty thousand dollars per annum, a considerable sum for the State in its present situation—I acknowledge to your Excellency that I saw with pleasure, rather than regret, the turn which the affair took. I shall be sorry, however, if it has contravened the intentions of the Legislature.

I will take the liberty to add upon this occasion that it has always appeared to me of great importance, to this State in particular as well as to the Union in general, that Federal rather than State provision should be made for the defence of every part of the Confederacy, in peace as well as in war.

Without entering into arguments of general policy, it will be sufficient to observe that this State is in all respects *critically situated.*

Its relative position, shape, and intersections, viewed on the map, strongly speak this language: Strengthen the Confederation; give it exclusively the power of the sword; let each State have no forces but its militia.

As a question of mere economy, the following considerations deserve great weight:

The North River facilitates attacks by sea and by land; and, besides the frontier forts, all military men are of opinion that a strong post should be maintained at West Point, or some other position on the lower part of the river.

If Canada is well governed, it may become well peopled, and by inhabitants attached to its government. The British nation, while it preserves the idea of retaining possession of that country, may be expected to keep on foot there a large force. The position of that force, either for defence or offence, will necessarily be such as will afford a prompt and easy access to us.

Our precautions for defence must be proportioned to their means of annoying us, and we may hereafter find it indispensable to increase our frontier garrisons.

The present charge of a competent force in that quarter, thrown additionally into the scale of those contributions which we must make to the payment of the public debt and to other objects of general expense if the Union lasts, would, I fear, enlarge our burden beyond our ability: that charge, hereafter increased as it may be, would be oppressively felt by the people. It includes not only the expense of paying and subsisting the necessary number of troops, but of keeping the fortifications in repair, probably of erecting others, and of furnishing the requisite supplies of military stores. I say nothing of the Indian nations, because, though it will be always prudent to be upon our guard against them, yet I am of opinion we diminish the necessity of it by making

them our friends; and I take it for granted there cannot be a serious doubt anywhere as to the obvious policy of endeavoring to do it. Their friendship alone can keep our frontiers in peace. It is essential to the improvement of the fur trade; an object of immense importance to the State. The attempt at the total expulsion of so desultory a people is as chimerical as it would be pernicious. War with them is as expensive as it is destructive. It has not a single object, for the acquisition of their lands is not to be wished till those now vacant are settled; and the surest, as well as the most just and humane way of removing them, is by extending our settlements to their neighborhood.

Indeed, it is not impossible they may be already willing to exchange their former possessions for others more remote.

The foregoing considerations would lose all force if we had full security that the rest of the world would make our safety and prosperity the first object of their reverence and care; but an expectation of this kind would be too much against the ordinary course of human affairs—too visionary to be a rule for national conduct.

It is true our situation secures us from conquest, if internal dissensions do not open the way; but when nations now make war upon each other, the object seldom is total conquest—partial acquisitions, the jealousy of power, the rivalship of dominion or of commerce, sometimes national emulation and antipathy, are the motives.

Nothing shelters us from the operation of either

of these causes. The fisheries, the fur trade, the navigation of the lakes and of the Mississippi, the Western territory, the islands of the West Indies, with reference to traffic,—in short, the passions of human nature, are abundant sources of contention and hostility.

I will not trespass further on your Excellency's patience. I expected indeed that my last letter would have finished my official communications, but Messrs. Duane and L'Hommedieu having transmitted the extract of your letter to Mr. Floyd and myself, in order that we might comply with what your Excellency thought would be expected by the Legislature, it became my duty to give this explanation. Mr. Floyd having been at Congress but a little time after the concurrent resolutions arrived, and being now at a great distance from me, occasions a separate communication.

N. B.—I did not at the time enclose the resolution directing the General to provide for garrisoning the frontier posts, because I understood it would in course be transmitted to you by the President or the Secretary at War.

TO THE HONORABLE THOMAS MIFFLIN, PRESIDENT OF CONGRESS

New York, Dec. 8, 1783.

Sir:

Being concerned as counsel for a number of persons who have been, since the annunciation of the pro-

visional treaty, indicted under the confiscation laws of this State for the part they are supposed to have taken in the late war, we are induced, at the desire of our clients and in their behalf, to apply to Congress, through your Excellency, for an exemplification of the definitive treaty. We take it for granted that ere this it will have been [done under the] direction of the United States. We have found a great strictness in the courts in this State. It will, we apprehend, be necessary to be able to produce an exemplification of the treaty under the seal of the United States. In a matter so interesting to a great number of individuals—for it does not belong to us to urge considerations of national honor,—we hope we shall be excused when we observe that there appears to be no probability that the Legislature of this State will interpose its authority to put a stop to prosecutions till the definitive treaty is announced in form. In the mean time a period is limited for the appearance of the indicted persons to plead to their indictments, and if they neglect to appear, judgment by default will be entered against them. It is therefore of great consequence to them that we should have in our possession as speedily as possible an authentic document of the treaty and of its ratification by Congress; and we, on this account, pray an exemplification of both.

We persuade ourselves that the justice and liberality of Congress will induce a ready compliance with our prayer, which will conduce to the security of a great number of individuals who derive their hopes of safety from the national faith.

TO JOHN BARKER CHURCH [1]

New York, March 10, 1784.

My Dear Sir:

In my last to you I informed you that a project for a land bank had been set on foot by Mr. Sayre as the ostensible parent, but I had reason to suspect the Chancellor [2] was the true father. The fact has turned out as I supposed, and the Chancellor, with a number of others, has since petitioned the Legislature for an exclusive charter for the proposed bank. I thought it necessary not only with a view to your project, but for the sake of the commercial interests of the State, to start an opposition to this scheme and took occasion to point out its absurdity and inconvenience to some of the most intelligent merchants, who presently saw the matter in a proper light and began to take measures to defeat the plan.

The Chancellor had taken so much pains with the country members that they all began to be per-

[1] John Barker Church, who married Angelica Schuyler, the sister of Mrs. Hamilton, was an Englishman by birth: and Lossing (*Life of Schuyler*, ii., p. 207) says that his name was Carter, and that he added the Church in this country and dropped it when on a visit to England. There is also a letter signed John Carter, addressed to Hamilton, and dated May 18, 1781, which seems to confirm Lossing. Yet there can be no doubt that here he was known as John Barker Church, because he is so described by Hamilton in a letter to Troup about his will, and Mr. Geo. L. Schuyler, of New York, very kindly writes me that Church was called John Barker in the will of Mr. Schuyler's grandfather, Gen. Schuyler. Church was associated with Col. Wadsworth in furnishing supplies to the French and American armies. Some time after his marriage, according to Lossing, he returned to England, became a member of Parliament, went much into society, and was a friend of the Prince of Wales and in the Carlton House set. He finally returned to New York where he remained until his death at an advanced age.

[2] The Chancellor was Robert R. Livingston.

suaded that the land bank was the true philosopher's stone that was to turn all their rocks and trees into gold, and there was great reason to apprehend a majority of the Legislature would have adopted his views. It became necessary to convince the projectors themselves of the impracticability of their scheme, and to counteract the impressions they had made by a direct application to the Legislature. Some of the merchants, to effect these purposes, set on foot a subscription for a money bank, and called upon me to subscribe. I was a little embarrassed how to act, but upon the whole I concluded it best to fall in with them, and endeavor to induce them to put the business upon such a footing as might enable you with advantage to combine your interests with theirs; for since the thing had been taken up upon the broad footing of the whole body of the merchants, it appeared to me that it never would be your interest to pursue a distinct project in opposition to theirs, but that you would prefer, so far as you might choose to employ money in this way, to become purchasers in the general bank. The object, on this supposition, was to have the bank founded on such principles as would give you a proper weight in the direction. Unluckily for this purpose I entered rather late into the measure. Proposals had been agreed upon, in which, among other things, it was settled that no stockholder, to whatever amount, should have more than seven votes, which was the number to which a holder of ten shares was to be entitled. At an after meeting of some of the most influential characters, I engaged them so

far to depart from this ground as to allow a vote for every five shares above ten.

The stockholders have since thought proper to appoint me one of the directors.[1] I shall hold it till Wadsworth and you come out, and if you choose to become partners in this bank I shall make a vacancy for one of you. I inclose you the constitution and the names of the president, directors, and cashier.

An application for a charter has been made to the Legislature, with a petition against granting an exclusive one to the land bank. The measures which have been taken appear to have had their effect upon the minds of the partisans of the land bank.

The affairs of the bank in Pennsylvania appear to be in some confusion. They have stopped discounts; but I have no apprehension that there is any thing more in the matter than temporary embarrassment, from having a little overshot their mark in their issues of paper, and from the opposition which the attempt to establish a new bank had produced.

I have had no tolerable offer for your land in Connecticut,—forty shillings, and that currency, per acre has been the highest, but I have written to Mr. Campfield, requesting him to inform himself well of the value of the land, and if he thinks it is not worth more, to accept the offer. I am told he is a judicious and honest man; and I presume the land where it is will never be worth any thing to you if it remains unsold. Betsy joins me in best affections to Mrs. C. and yourself.

[1] This bank thus formed was the Bank of New York.

TO THOMAS FITZSIMMONS [1]

New York, March 21, 1784.

Dear Sir:

Permit me to introduce to your acquaintance and attention Mr. Seton, Cashier of the Bank of New York. He is just setting out for Philadelphia to procure materials and information in the forms of business. I recommend him to you, because I am persuaded you will with pleasure facilitate his object. Personally, I dare say you will be pleased with him.

He will tell you of our embarrassments and prospects. I hope an incorporation of the two banks, which is evidently the interest of both, has put an end to differences in Philadelphia. Here a wild and impracticable scheme of a land bank stands in our way; the projectors of it persevering in spite of the experience they have, that all the mercantile and moneyed influence is against it.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

New York, March 21, 1784.

I duly received, my dear sir, your letter of the 27th of January, and I would have sooner told you how much pleasure it gave me, if I had had time, but legislative folly has afforded so plentiful a harvest to us lawyers that we have scarcely a moment to spare from the substantial business of reaping. Today being Sunday, I have resolved to give an hour

[1] Thomas Fitzsimmons, an eminent merchant of Philadelphia, was after a leading member of Congress and always a stanch supporter and friend of Hamilton.

to friendship and to you. Good people would say that I had much better be paying my devotions to the *great* [1]

* * * * * *

devotions I mean; for with so lively an imagination as yours it is necessary to be explicit, lest you should be for making a different association that would not suit me quite as well.

To say that I was amused with your letter was to say what must have happened of course; a good theme in good hands could not fail to be amusing. The coalition you mention is not to be wondered at, though in a political light it is whimsical enough; but the meeting of extremes at the same point is a common case. I expect in another year to see our political antipodes in this city shaking hands, but whenever it happens it will not affect me as it seems to have done you in the instance you mention, because probably I shall not have the same reasons.— To be serious:

The erection of a new bank in Philadelphia does not appear to me an evil to the community. The competition may indeed render the large profits of the old bank less permanent, but they will always remain considerable enough; and the competition will cause business to be done on easier and better terms in each, to the advancement of trade in general. If I reason wrong, correct me. That a stockholder of the old bank should feel his interest wounded, that those who have made their property in it subservient in some measure to the support of the

[1] There is a slice cut out of the body of the letter here.

Revolution should feel a degree of indignation at the kind of rivalship which has started up, are both natural sensations; but that large profits should produce rivalship, that men in a matter of this kind should employ their money where they expect the greatest advantage and the cheapest market in purchasing[1]

* * * * * *

second bank *has been* established, I think you will, on reflection, agree with me that they ought to wish to be interested in both the institutions, and that therefore it is the duty of those who have the laying out of their money to purchase in the new bank, on the principle I have hinted at as well as the circumstances of a lower price. The whole of this business, my dear friend, is a mere mercantile speculation, and I am sure when there has been time to cool down the considerate proprietors of the old bank will blame nobody for adventuring upon mere mercantile principles. To you I need not say that it is chimerical to expect any other will prevail.

Were I to advise upon this occasion, it would be as soon as possible to bring about a marriage or, perhaps what you will prefer, an intrigue between the old bank and the new. Let the latter be the wife or, still to pursue your propensity, the mistress of the former. As a mistress (or, you 'll say a wife) it is to be expected she will every now and then be capricious and inconstant; but in the main it will be the interest of both husband and wife that they should live well together and manage their affairs with good humor and concert. If they quarrel they will not

[1] MS. cut.

only expose themselves to the gibes of their neighbors, but the more knowing part of these will endeavor to keep them by the ears in order to make the favors of each more cheap and more easily attainable.

I ought, in return, to give you an account of what we are doing here, but I will, in the lump, tell you that we are doing those things which we ought not to do, and leaving undone those things which we ought to do. Instead of wholesome regulations for the improvement of our polity and commerce, we are laboring to contrive methods to mortify and punish Tories and to explain away treaties.

Let us both erect a temple to time, only regretting that we shall not command a longer portion of it to see what will be the event of the American drama.[1]

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

New York, April 7, 1784.

Pardon me, my dear sir, for not sooner having obeyed your orders with respect to the enclosed. I part with it reluctantly; for wit is so rare an article, that when we get so much of it in so small a compass we cannot easily consent to be dispossessed of it. I am very happy to hear of the union of your two banks, for you will believe me when I tell that on more deliberate consideration I was led to view the competition in a different light from that in which it at first struck me. I had no doubt that it was against the interests of the proprietors, but on a super-

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

ficial view I perceived benefits to the community, which on a more close inspection I found were not real.

You will call our proceedings here *strange doings*. If some folks were paid to counteract the prosperity of the State, they could not take more effectual measures than they do. But it is in vain to attempt to kick against the pricks.

Discrimination bills, partial taxes, schemes to engross public property in the hands of those who have present power, to banish the real wealth of the State, and to substitute paper bubbles, are the only dishes that suit the public palate at this time.

Permit me to ask your opinion on a point of importance to the New York Bank—the best mode of receiving and paying out gold. I am aware of the evils of that which has been practised upon in Philadelphia—*weighing in quantities*—but I cannot satisfy myself about a substitute, unless there could be a coinage.

Favor me with your sentiments on this subject as soon as you can.

TO DE CHASTELLUX [1]

New York, June 14, 1784.

Monsieur Le Chevalier:

Colonel Clarkson,[2] who will have the honor of

[1] François Jean, Marquis de Chastellux, was one of the most distinguished of our French allies; he was born in 1734, and died in 1788. He was something of a literary man, and left, among other works, an entertaining account of his adventures in this country. He became Marquis in the year 1784.

[2] Colonel Matthew Clarkson, of New York, a distinguished officer of the Revolution, born in 1759; died in 1825. He was aid-de-camp to General Gates, and severely wounded at the battle of Stillwater.

delivering you this, being already known to you, I give him this letter more for the sake of renewing to you the assurances of my attachment and esteem, than from a supposition that he will stand in need of any new title to your attention. I will therefore only say of him that his excellent qualities cannot be known without interesting those to whom they are known, and that from a personal and warm regard for him, I should be happy, if any thing I could say, could be an additional motive for your countenance and civilities to him.

I speak of him in the light of a friend. As a messenger of science, he cannot fail to acquire the patronage of one of her favorite ministers. He combines with the views of private satisfaction, which a voyage to Europe cannot but afford, an undertaking for the benefit of a seminary of learning, lately instituted in this State.

Learning is the common concern of mankind; and why may not poor republicans, who can do little more than wish her well, send abroad to solicit the favor of her patrons and friends? Her ambassador will tell you his errand. I leave it to your mistress to *command* and to the trustees of the institution to *ask* your permission in promoting his mission.

Permit me only to add that if there is any thing in this country by which I can contribute to your satisfaction, nothing will make me happier at all times than that your commands may enable me to give you proofs of the respectful and affectionate attachment with which, etc.

TO HIS BROTHER, JAMES HAMILTON—ST. THOMAS

New York, June 23, 1785.

My Dear Brother:

I have received your letter of the 31st of May last, which and one other are the only letters I have received from you in many years. You did not receive one which I wrote to you about six months ago. The situation you describe yourself to be in gives me much pain, and nothing will make me happier than, as far as may be in my power, to contribute to your relief. I will cheerfully pay your draft upon me for fifty pounds sterling whenever it shall appear. I wish it was in my power to desire you to enlarge the sum; but, though my future prospects are of the most flattering kind, my present engagements would render it inconvenient to me to advance a larger sum. My affection for you, however, will not permit me to be inattentive to your welfare, and I hope time will prove to you that I feel all the sentiments of a brother. Let me only to request of you to exert your industry for a year or two more where you are, and at the end of that time I promise myself to be able to invite you to a more comfortable settlement in this country. But what has become of our dear father? It is an age since I have heard from him, or of him, though I have written him several letters. Perhaps, alas, he is no more, and I shall not have the pleasing opportunity of contributing to render the close of his life more happy than the progress of it. My heart bleeds at the recollection of his misfortunes and embarrassments. Sometimes I flatter myself his brothers have extended their support to him, and

that he now enjoys tranquillity and ease. At other times I fear he is suffering in indigence. Should he be alive, inform him of my inquiries; beg him to write to me, and tell him how ready I shall be to devote myself and all I have to his accommodation and happiness. I do not advise your coming to this country at present, for the war has also put things out of order here, and people in your business find a subsistence difficult enough. My object will be, by and by, to get you settled on a farm.[1]

TO ISRAEL WILKES [2]

November 8, 1785.

SIR:

The message which you sent me yesterday, and your letter today, were conceived in terms to which

[1] Reprinted from the *Reminiscences of Jas. A. Hamilton*, p. 2.

[2] This letter is given in the edition of 1850 as addressed to John Wilkes, but as he was never in this country, the first sentence, "the message which you sent me yesterday and your letter today," shows that it could not have been written to John Wilkes, but must have been addressed to some one in New York. The following letter, now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department, throws light on the subject:

TO ———.

NEW YORK, June 18, 1784.

SIR:

I have been duly honored with your letter of the 30th of March, and am much flattered by the confidence you have reposed in me. I should with pleasure have undertaken to execute your wishes had I been in a situation that left me at liberty to do it; but it has happened that Mr. Wilkes, some time since, applied to me on the same subject; and though I was not absolutely retained by him, yet as I have been consulted on the business, I should conceive it improper to act against him. In this dilemma, as you were at a great distance, and he might elude your pursuit before you could make a new choice of a person to manage the affair for you, I thought it my duty to transfer the trust to some person on the spot, to whose judgment and integrity your

I am little accustomed. Were I to consult my feelings only upon the occasion, I should return an answer very different from that which I have, in justice to my own conduct, resolved upon. But in what-

interests might be safely committed. I have fixed upon Mr. Samuel Jones [1] for this purpose, a gentleman as distinguished for his probity as for his professional knowledge, and have accordingly substituted him in my place.

He has had Mr. Wilkes arrested upon your demand, who, not being able to obtain bail, is of course, in prison. This has been done in pursuance of your intimation that Mr. Wilkes' friends are able to do something for him; and it is to be hoped that, rather than suffer him to be in jail, they will either satisfy or become bound for at least a part of your demand. This seems to be your only resource; for he has no property in this country, and has been of late in no way of acquiring any.

He did not (as you had been informed) accompany Mrs. Hayley [2] to this country; but it is reported that she has lately arrived at Boston.

I am requested by Mr. Jones to mention to you that it will be necessary you should furnish him with the account of sales rendered by Mr. Wilkes, and, at the same time, with the bills of exchange which he accepted. He wishes to be possessed of these as evidence in case of a controverted suit. You mention that the bills of exchange were sent to New York, but you do not say to whom. On tracing the matter, we have reason to conclude they were sent to Mr. McAdam; but as he is now in England, we cannot have recourse to him to obtain them. Circumstanced as I am, I must now take leave of this business, without acting hereafter on either side.

But as a just representation of facts is always most conducive to the settlement of disputes, and may enable you the better to judge what course it will be proper for you to pursue, I think it incumbent upon me, from the confidence you have been pleased to repose in me, to inform you that I have taken pains to ascertain the quality and con-

[1] Afterwards Chief Justice of New York, called "the father of the New York Bar," and a very eminent lawyer.

[2] Mary Wilkes, youngest sister of the famous agitator, married, first, Samuel Stork, merchant, of London; second, George Hayley, alderman. After the death of Mr. Hayley she came to this country, and remained for some time, chiefly in Boston, where she married her third husband, Mr. Jeffreys, with whom she returned to London in 1803.

ever light we are to view each other hereafter, and however harsh and indelicate I may think the method you have taken to obtain an explanation to be, I shall, for my own part, leave no room to suppose

dition of the wines of both cargoes on their arrival in this country; and the result of my inquiries of gentlemen who could not be mistaken in the matter, and on whose veracity I can depend, has been that the wine of the second, as well as the first, cargo was in general either damaged or of indifferent quality, and necessarily sold at very low rates.

I am inclined to suspect that Mr. Wilkes' intention will be to endeavor to procure an act of insolvency in his favor at the next meeting of the Legislature (continuing in the meantime in confinement), and that he will in this expectation rather discourage his friends from becoming sureties for him.

I think, with proper management on the part of those concerned for you, it will be very difficult for him to succeed in this scheme; but moderation in your behalf will be best calculated to frustrate the experiment, and lay him under a necessity of calling in the aid of his friends.

I persuade myself you will do justice to the motives of these intimations, and, though I have it not in my power to serve you upon the present occasion, will permit me to make you an offer of my best services upon every other, and to assure you that I am, with much consideration and esteem, etc.[1]

[1] This letter has no address, but is evidently written to some one in England who wished to retain Hamilton as counsel. The allusion to Mrs. Hayley makes it clear that the Mr. Wilkes to whom the letter in the text was addressed was of the agitator's family, while the letter just given shows that it could not have been John Wilkes, as Mr. J. C. Hamilton has it, because an eminent New York lawyer could not have arrested and put in prison in New York a man who was never in this country. It is plain, therefore, that the Mr. Wilkes intended was the eldest brother of the agitator, Israel Wilkes, who came to New York at quite an early age and, with the exception of occasional visits to England, remained there until his death in his eighty-first year. It is impossible now to unravel the details of the affair, and as it was purely a matter of business the letters might have been omitted had not Mr. J. C. Hamilton seen fit to print one of them with what must be a wrong address. I have not been able to determine, or even guess at, Hamilton's would-be client. It may be that he was the Mr. Macaulay mentioned in the letter in the text, but that helps us but little. Mrs.

that I intentionally gave you any cause to complain. I shall, therefore, explicitly declare, that

Macaulay, the historian, was in intimate relation with the Wilkes family, and is constantly mentioned in the letters of John Wilkes and his daughter, but her husband was not Mr. but Dr. Macaulay. The most curious thing is that Mr. J. C. Hamilton prints an answer from "John Wilkes," written in reply to Hamilton's of the day before, given above.

WILKES TO HAMILTON

SIR: November 9, 1785.

The moment I received yours, I perceived the precipitancy of my own conduct, and was very sorry I had so far mistaken both our characters as to act in the manner I have done. I flatter myself that the same candor which has dictated yours will be exerted towards mine, and that you will only view it as the act of a man who conceived himself injured. As you have never experienced the cruel reverses of fortune, you can scarcely judge how the least insinuations to their prejudice will affect those persons who have; or how much more suspicious they are of the behavior of mankind towards them.

The morning I left the message for you I had been called upon by one of the creditors of Mr. Heart, who thought it very strange no dividend was made; and he insinuated some party must be interested in the delay. It is the first money transaction I have engaged in since my release. I felt the insinuation as alluding to me, and with a force which, perhaps, I should not. However, that moment I went to your office.

The next morning, when I saw your note to Mr. Atkinson, and found myself totally set aside in a business where I had, most undoubtedly, been originally neglected, I felt myself very much agitated, and in that frame of mind I wrote my last to you.

So much I thought it necessary to add in explanation.

I am convinced now I have been too hasty, and I am sorry for it. It will put me on my guard in future, and, I make no doubt, prove beneficial to me, provided it has not been the means of hurting me in your estimation, which I am now more desirous than ever of obtaining.

I am, sir, etc. JOHN WILKES.[1]

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[1] I have shown that the Wilkes in question must have been one of the family of the English agitator, and could not have been the agitator himself, but could, and indeed must have been, his brother Israel. Why Mr. J. C. Hamilton should have printed the letter as from John Wilkes cannot be determined. That the original should have been signed "John Wilkes" seems most unlikely.

whatever inattention may have appeared towards you, was solely owing to the continual hurry in which my engagements, for a long time past, have kept me; and that, so far from its having been occasioned by any designed neglect, it was what, under the circumstances, might have happened to my best friend. Indeed, much of what you mention to have been done by you, I am a stranger to. The frequent callings, by yourself and by your servant, did not, that I recollect, come to my knowledge. It is possible some of them might have been mentioned to me, and, in the hurry of my mind, forgotten. Once, I remember, I saw your servant just as I was going out on some urgent business. I sent a verbal message, promising that I would see you; which I intended to do, as soon as I had made up my resolution on the business of the interview. When I received your note I was about sending you an answer in writing; but, upon inquiring for your servant, and finding him gone, I omitted it, with an intention to see you personally.

You say it is near six months since you first applied to me on the business in question. A great part of the time I gave you all the answer I could give you—to wit, that I had written to Mr. Macaulay, and only waited his answer. About two months since, I received it. I have been the greater part of the time out of town on indispensable business. In the intervals I have been occupied about objects of immediate and absolute necessity, which could not have been delayed without letting my business run into utter confusion. Mr. Macaulay's concerns have

been hanging upon my spirits. I have been promising myself, from day to day, to bring them to a conclusion, but more pressing objects have unavoidably postponed it. I thought the delay required some apology to Mr. Macaulay, but I never dreamt of having given occasion of offence to you.

I will not, however, deny, upon a review of what has passed, that there have been, through hurry and inadvertency on my part, appearances of neglect towards you; but between gentlemen and men of business, unfavorable conclusions ought not to be drawn before explanations are asked. Allowances ought to be made for the situations of parties; and the omissions of men, deeply involved in business, ought rather to be ascribed to that cause than to ill intentions.

Had you, in the first instance, expressed to me (in such a manner as respect for yourself and delicacy to me dictated) your sense of these appearances, I should have taken pains to satisfy you that nothing improper towards you was intended by me. But to make one of my clerks the instrument of communication, and the bearer to me of a harsh accusation, was ill-judged and ungenteel. To take it for granted that you had received an injury from me, without first giving me an opportunity of an explanation, and to couch your sense of it in terms so offensive as some of those used in your letter, is an additional instance of precipitation and rudeness. Inadvertencies susceptible of misapprehension, I may commit; but I am incapable of intending to wound or injure any man who has given me no cause for it;

and I am incapable of doing any thing, sir, of which I need be ashamed. The intimation, on your part, is unmerited and unwarrantable. After thus having explained my own conduct to you, and given you my ideas of yours, it will depend on yourself how far I shall be indifferent, or not, to your future sentiments of my character. I shall only add, that to-morrow you shall receive from me my determination on the matter of business between us.

TO WASHINGTON

November 23, 1785.

Dear Sir:

Major Fairly is just setting out on a visit to you, I believe, on some business relating to the Cincinnati. The society of this State met some short time since, and took into consideration the proposed alterations in the original frame of the Institution; some were strenuous for adhering to the old constitution, a few adopting the new, and many for a middle line. This disagreement of opinion and the consideration that the different State societies pursuing different courses —some adopting the alterations entire, others rejecting them in the same way, others adopting in part and rejecting in part—might beget confusion and defeat good purposes, induced a proposal which was unanimously agreed to, that a committee should be appointed to prepare and lay before the society a circular-letter expressive of the sense of the society on the different alterations proposed, and recommending the giving powers to a general meeting of

the Cincinnati, to make such alterations as might be thought advisable to obviate objections and promote the interests of the society. I believe there will be no difficulty in agreeing to change the present mode of continuing the society; but it appears to be the wish of our members that some other mode may be defined and substituted, and that it might not be left to the uncertainty of legislative provision. We object, too, to putting the funds under legislative direction. Indeed, it appears to us, the Legislatures will not at present be inclined to give us any sanction. I am of the committee, and I cannot but flatter myself that when the object is better digested and more fully explained it will meet your approbation.

The poor *Baron* [1] is still soliciting Congress, and has every prospect of indigence before him. He has his imprudences, but, upon the whole, he has rendered valuable services, and his merits and the reputation of the country alike demand that he should not be left to suffer want.

If there could be any mode by which your influence could be employed in his favor, by writing to your friends in Congress, or otherwise, the Baron and his friends would be under great obligations to you.

TO NATHANIEL HAZARD

April 24, 1786.

SIR:

Your letter of the 21st was only delivered me this morning. The good opinion of liberal men I hold in

[1] Steuben.

too high estimation not to be flattered by that part of your letter which relates to me personally. The other part I have communicated to General Schuyler, and he assures me he will see all his friends this afternoon upon the subject; so that I have no doubt, as far as his influence extends, it will be employed in favor of the success of the bill in the Assembly, as it has already been in the Senate.

In taking this step, however, I would not be understood to declare any opinion concerning the principles of the bill, with which I am not sufficiently acquainted to form a decided opinion. I have merely made your letter the occasion of introducing the subject to General Schuyler, whose sentiments are as favorable to your wishes as you could desire.

I make this observation from that spirit of candor which I hope will always direct my conduct. I am aware that I have been represented as an enemy to the wishes of what you call your corps. If by this has been meant that I do not feel as much as any man, not immediately interested, for the distresses of those merchants who have been in a great measure the victims of the Revolution, the supposition does not do justice either to my head or my heart. But if it means that I have always viewed the mode of relieving them as a matter of peculiar delicacy and difficulty, it is well founded.

I should have thought it unnecessary to enter into this explanation, were it not that I am held up as a candidate at the ensuing election; and I would not wish that the step I have taken in respect to your letter should be considered as implying more than it

does; for I would never wish to conciliate at the expense of candor. On the other hand, I confide in your liberality not to infer more than I intend from the explanation I have given; and hope you will believe me to be, with great cordiality and esteem, etc.

TO MESSRS. SEMPHILL & CO.

GENTLEMEN: NEW YORK, May 20, 1786.

On the recommendation of Mr. Nicholas Cruger,[1] of this city, I take the liberty to commit to your care a small matter in which I am interested. I am informed that Mr. John Hallwood, a relation of mine, who died some time since in St. Croix, has, by his will, left me one-fourth part of his estate. The amount, I imagine, is not very considerable, but, whatever it may be, I shall be glad to have it collected and remitted. Mr. Hallwood's estate, I believe, consisted entirely in his share in his grandfather's estate, Mr. James Lytton,[2] whose affairs have been a long time in a dealing [sic] court, but one would hope are now ready for a final settlement. Dr. Hugh Knox can give you further information on the subject.

[1] Hamilton's early friend and employer.

[2] Mr. Hallwood's grandfather was Mr. James Lytton, as it here appears, and Mr. Hallwood was a relative of Hamilton. In the appendix to my *Life of Hamilton* (American Statesmen Series), p. 294, I have discussed, in connection with the question of his parentage, his relationship to the Lyttons. This letter tends to show that, if the view there suggested is probable, Hamilton's mother was a Miss Lytton, and not Miss Faucette. This letter is valuable only on this account, for it proves beyond a peradventure Hamilton's relationship to the Lyttons, which is mentioned by Mr. John C. Hamilton in the first and unfinished *Life*, but which is omitted in the *History of the Republic*.

As I know money concerns in your island rarely improve by delay, if things should not be in a train to admit of an immediate settlement, I shall be ready, to effect this to transfer my claim to any person who may incline to the purchase at a discount of five and twenty per cent.

This, however, I submit to your discretion, and authorize you to do whatever you think for my interest. Inclosed I send you a power of attorney, which I presume you will find competent. Should it be in my power to render you any services here, I shall with pleasure obey your commands.

TO JOHN THOMAS, ESQ., SHERIFF OF WESTCHESTER

NEW YORK, June 22, 1786.

SIR:

I think it necessary to apprise you that in my opinion you will not be safe in taking paper money on executions, without the consent of the parties, and in those which I have sent to you that consent I believe cannot be obtained.

This is a matter, however, which I mention to you in confidence, for your own safety. I would not wish to have much said about it till you should be under a necessity of explaining yourself, lest it should injure the credit of the paper on its first appearance, to which (whatever be my opinion of the measure itself since it has been adopted) I would not wish to be accessory.[1]

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO WASHINGTON

NEW YORK, July 3, 1787.

DEAR SIR:

In my passage through the Jerseys, and since my arrival here, I have taken particular pains to discover the public sentiment, and I am more and more convinced that this is the critical opportunity for establishing the prosperity of this country on a solid foundation. I have conversed with men of information, not only in this city, but from different parts of the State, and they agree that there has been an astonishing revolution for the better in the minds of the people.

The prevailing apprehension among thinking men is, that the Convention, from the fear of shocking the popular opinion, will not go far enough. They seem to be convinced that a strong, well-mounted government will better suit the popular palate than one of a different complexion. Men in office are indeed taking all possible pains to give an unfavorable impression of the Convention, but the current seems to be moving strongly the other way.

A plain but sensible man, in a conversation I had with him yesterday, expressed himself nearly in this manner: The people begin to be convinced that "their excellent form of government," as they have been used to call it, will not answer their purpose, and that they must substitute something not very remote from that which they have lately quitted.

These appearances, though they will not warrant a conclusion that the people are yet ripe for such a plan as I advocate, yet serve to prove that there is

no reason to despair of their adopting one equally energetic, if the Convention should think proper to propose it. They serve to prove that we ought not to allow too much weight to objections drawn from the supposed repugnance of the people to an efficient constitution. I confess I am more and more inclined to believe that former habits of thinking are regaining their influence with more rapidity than is generally imagined.

Not having compared ideas with you, sir, I cannot judge how far our sentiments agree; but, as I persuade myself the genuineness of my representations will receive credit with you, my anxiety for the event of the deliberations of the Convention induces me to make this communication of what appears to be the tendency of the public mind.

I own to you, sir, that I am seriously and deeply distressed at the aspect of the counsels which prevailed when I left Philadelphia. I fear that we shall let slip the golden opportunity of rescuing the American empire from disunion, anarchy, and misery.

No motly or feeble measure can answer the end, or will finally receive the public support. Decision is true wisdom, and will be not less reputable to the Convention than salutary to the community.

I shall of necessity remain here ten or twelve days. If I have reason to believe that my attendance at Philadelphia will not be mere waste of time, I shall, after that period, rejoin the Convention.

TO ——— [1]

NEW YORK, ———, 1787.

DEAR SIR:

Agreeably to what passed between us, I have had an interview with Mr. Auldjo, and I flatter myself if there is (as I doubt not there will be) as much moderation on the part of Major Peirce as there appears to be on that of Mr. Auldjo, that the affair between them may yet be amicably terminated.

But Mr. Auldjo observes, I confess in my opinion with propriety, that he ought to know with some precision the matters which have given offence to Major Peirce, before he can enter into explanations, which he declares himself to be very ready to do with coolness and candor the moment he shall be enabled to do it by a specification of the subjects of complaint. If a personal interview is for any reason disagreeable to Major Peirce, I entreat you, my dear sir, to obtain from him and to communicate to me by letter the substance of what has occasioned his dissatisfaction, with so much particularity only as will put it in the power of Mr. Auldjo to give an explicit answer. Major Peirce will, I hope, have no scruples about this, for as the door of explanation has been opened by Mr. Auldjo, there is no punctilio which stands in his way; and I trust he will feel the force of a sentiment which prudence and humanity equally dictate, that extremities ought then only to ensue when after a fair experiment accommodation

[1] Addressed presumably to the second of Major Peirce in the affair of honor which seems to have been impending between that gentleman and Hamilton's friend Mr. Auldjo.

has been found impracticable. An attention to this principle interests the characters of both the gentlemen concerned, and with them our own, and from every other consideration, as well as that of personal friendship to the parties, I sincerely wish to give it its full operation. I am convinced you are not less anxious to effect this than myself, and I trust our joint endeavors will not prove unsuccessful.

I cannot, however, conclude without making one remark. Though Mr. Auldjo has expressed and still entertains a desire of explanation, it would ill become him to solicit it. Whatever therefore in my expressions may seem to urge such an explanation with the earnestness of entreaty, must be ascribed to my own feelings and to that inclination which every man of sensibility must feel—not to see extremities take place if it be in his power to prevent them, or until they become an absolutely necessary sacrifice to public opinion.

TO MAJOR PEIRCE

1787.

DEAR SIR:

As the enclosed contains details relating to your private affairs, it is judged most delicate to put it under cover to you. Permit me to use the privilege of a friend to say, that what has appeared to you offensive in the conduct of Mr. Auldjo, seems to have been a very natural result of disappointments on his side, to which your disappointments gave birth, influenced too, perhaps, in some degree by incidents which may have been misrepresented or misunder-

stood. His explanations speak a language which I sincerely think may put an end to your controversy—I as sincerely hope this may be the case. I speak with the more freedom, because in a difference between men I esteem—a difference evidently foreign from any real enmity between them,—I can never consent to take up the character of a second in a duel till I have in vain tried that of the mediator. Be content with *enough*, for *more* ought not to be expected.[1]

TO AULDJO

New York, July 26, 1787.

Sir:

I have delivered the paper you committed to me, as it stood altered, to Major Peirce, from whose conduct I am to conclude the affair between you is at an end. He informs me that he is shortly to set out on a jaunt up the North River.

As you intimate a wish to have my sentiments in writing on the transaction, I shall with pleasure declare that the steps you have taken in consequence of Mr. Peirce's challenge have been altogether in conformity to my opinion of what would be prudent, proper, and honorable on your part. They seem to have satisfied Mr. Pierce's scruples arising from what he apprehended in some particulars to have been your conduct to him, and I presume we are to hear nothing further of the matter.

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO RUFUS KING [1]

NEW YORK, August 20, 1787.

DEAR SIR:

Since my arrival here I have written to my colleagues, informing them if either of them would come down, I would accompany him to Philadelphia; so much for the sake of propriety and public opinion.

In the meantime, if any material alteration should happen to be made in the plan now before the Convention, I will be obliged to you for a communication of it. I will also be obliged to you to let me know when your conclusion is at hand, for I would choose to be present at that time.

TO COLONEL JEREMIAH WADSWORTH [2]

August 20, 1787.

MY DEAR SIR:

The inclosed is said to be the copy of a letter circulating in your State. The history of its appearance among us is that it was sent by one *Whitmore*, of Stratford, formerly in the Paymaster-General's office, to one James Reynolds of this city.

I am at a loss clearly to understand its object, and have some suspicion that it has been fabricated to excite jealousy against the Convention, with a view at an opposition to their recommendations. At all

[1] The eminent statesman of Massachusetts and New York. He was always one of Hamilton's most intimate friends.

[2] Colonel Jeremiah Wadsworth, of Connecticut, Commissary-General in the Revolutionary army, delegate to the Continental, and member of the National, Congress. By his reply to this letter it appears that the person whom Hamilton calls Whitmore was named Wetmore.

events, I wish, if possible, to trace its source, and send it to you for that purpose.

Whitmore must of course say where he got it, and by pursuing the information, we may at last come at the author. Let me know the political connections of this man and the complexion of the people most active in the circulation of the letter. Be so good as to attend to this inquiry somewhat particularly, as I have different reasons of some moment for setting it on foot.

TO RUFUS KING

New York, August 28, 1787.

Dear Sir:

I wrote you some days since to request you to inform me when there was a prospect of your finishing, as I intended to be with you for certain reasons before the conclusion.

It is whispered here that some late changes in your scheme have taken place which give it a higher tone. Is this the case? I leave town to-day to attend a circuit in a neighboring county, from which I shall return the last of the week, and shall be glad to find a line from you explanatory of the period of the probable termination of your business.

TO WASHINGTON

October, 1787.

Dear Sir:

You probably saw some time since some animadversions on certain expressions of Governor Clinton

respecting the Convention. You may have seen a piece signed "A Republican," attempting to bring the fact into question, and endeavoring to controvert the conclusions drawn from it, if true. My answer you will find in the inclosed. I trouble you with it merely from that anxiety which is natural to every man, to have his veracity at least stand in a fair light. The matter seems to be given up by the Governor, and the fact, with the inferences from it, stand against him in full force and operate as they ought to do.

It is, however, of some importance to the party to diminish whatever credit or influence I may possess, and to effect this they stick at nothing. Among many contemptible artifices practised by them they have had recourse to an insinuation that I *palmed* myself upon you, and that you *dismissed* me from your family.[1] This I confess hurts my feelings, and if it obtains credit, will require a contradiction.

You, sir, will undoubtedly recollect the manner in which I came into your family and went out of it, and know how destitute of foundation such insinuations are. My confidence in your justice will not permit me to doubt your readiness to put the matter in its true light in your answer to this letter. It cannot be my wish to give any complexion to the affair which might excite the least scruple to you,

[1] In his reply to this letter, Washington says: "But as you say it is insinuated by some of your political adversaries and may obtain public credit, 'that you *palmed* yourself upon me and was *dismissed* from my family,' and call upon me to do you justice by a recital of the facts, I do therefore explicitly declare that both charges are entirely unfounded."

but I confess it would mortify me to be under the imputation either of having obtruded myself into the family of a General or having been turned out of it.

The new Constitution is as popular in this city as it is possible for any thing to be, and the prospect thus far is favorable to it throughout the State. But there is no saying what turn things may take when the full flood of official influence is let loose against it. This is to be expected; for, though the Governor has not publicly declared himself, his particular connections and confidential friends are loud against it.

Mrs. Hamilton joins in respectful compliments to Mrs. Washington.

TO WASHINGTON

October 30, 1787.

I am much obliged to your Excellency for the explicit manner in which you contradict the insinuations mentioned in my last letter. The only use I shall make of your answer will be to put it into the hands of a few friends.

The constitution proposed has in this State warm friends and warm enemies. The first impressions everywhere are in its favor, but the artillery of its opponents makes some impression. The event cannot yet be foreseen. The inclosed is the first number of a series of papers to be written in its defence.[1]

I send you also, at the request of the Baron de Steuben, a printed pamphlet containing the grounds

[1] This allusion is to *The Federalist*

of an application lately made to Congress. He tells me there is some reference to you, the object of which he does not himself seem clearly to understand, but imagines it may be in your power to be of service to him.

There are public considerations that induce me to be somewhat anxious for his success. He is fortified with materials which, in Europe, could not fail to establish the belief of the contract he alleges. The documents of service he possesses are of a nature to convey an exalted idea of them. The compensations he has received, though considerable, if compared with those which have been received by American officers, will, according to European ideas, be very scanty in application to a *stranger* who is acknowledged to have rendered essential services. Our reputation abroad is not at present too high. To dismiss an old soldier empty and hungry, to seek the bounty of those on whom he has no claims, and to complain of unkind returns and violated engagements, will certainly not tend to raise it. I confess, too, there is something in my feelings which would incline me in this case to go further than might be strictly necessary, rather than drive a man, at the Baron's time of life, who has been a faithful servant, to extremities. And this is unavoidable if he does not succeed in his present attempt. What he asks would, all calculations made, terminate in this: an allowance of his five hundred and eighty guineas a year. He only wishes a recognition of the contract. He knows that until affairs mend no money can be produced. I do not know how far it may be in your

power to do him any good, but I shall be mistaken if the considerations I have mentioned do not appear to your Excellency to have some weight.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

New York, April 3, 1788.

I have been very delinquent, my dear sir, in not thanking you for your letter from Philadelphia. The remarks you made on a certain subject are important, and will be attended to.

There is truly much embarrassment in the case.

I think, however, the principles we have talked of are not only just, but will apply to the other departments. Nor will the consequences appear so disagreeable as they may seem at first sight, when we attend to the true import of the rule established. The States *retain* all the authorities they were before possessed of, not alienated in the three modes pointed out; but this does not include cases which are the creatures of the new Constitution. For instance, the crime of treason against the United States *immediately* is a crime known only to the new Constitution. There of course *was* no power in the State constitutions to pardon that crime. There will therefore be none under the new, etc. This is something likely, it seems to me, to afford the best solution of the difficulty. I send you the *Federalist* from the beginning to the conclusion of the commentary on the Executive Branch. If our suspicions of the author be right, he must be too much engaged to make a rapid progress in what remains.

The Court of Chancery and a Circuit Court are now sitting.

We are told that your election has succeeded, with which we all felicitate ourselves. I will thank you for an account of the result generally. In this State our prospects are much as you left them. A moot point which side will prevail. Our friends to the northward are active.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

May 4, 1788.

My Dear Sir:

I believe I am in your debt a letter or two, which is owing to my occupation in relation to the elections, etc.

These are now over in this State, but the result is not known. All depends upon Albany, where both sides claim the victory. Our doubts will not be removed till the latter end of the month. I hope your expectations of Virginia have not diminished.

Respecting the first volume of *Publius* I have executed your commands. The books have been sent addressed to the care of Governor Randolph. The second, we are informed, will be out in the course of a week, and an equal number shall be forwarded. Inclosed is a letter, committed to my care by Mr. Vanderkemp, which I forward with pleasure.

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

My Dear Sir: New York, May 19, 1788.

I acknowledge my delinquency in not thanking you before for your obliging letter from Richmond.

But the truth is that I have been so overwhelmed in avocations of one kind or another, that I have scarcely had a moment to spare to a friend. You I trust will be the less disposed to be inexorable, as I hope you will believe there is no one for whom I have more *inclination* than yourself—I mean of the *male* kind.

Your account of the situation of Virginia was interesting, and the present appearances as represented here justify your conjectures. It does not however appear that the adoption of the Constitution can be considered as out of doubt in that State. Its conduct upon the occasion will certainly be of critical importance.

In this State, as far as we can judge, the elections have gone wrong. The event, however, will not certainly be known till the end of the month. Violence rather than moderation is to be looked for from the opposite party. Obstinacy seems the prevailing trait in the character of its leader. The language is that if all the other States adopt, this is to persist in refusing the Constitution. It is reduced to a certainty that Clinton has in several conversations declared the *Union* unnecessary—though I have the information through channels which do not permit a public use to be made of it.

We have, notwithstanding this unfavorable complexion of things, two sources of hope: one, the chance of a ratification by nine States before we decide, and the influence of this upon the firmness of the *followers;* the other, the probability of a change of sentiment in the people, auspicious to the Constitution.

The current has been for some time running toward it; though the whole flood of official influence, accelerated by a torrent of falsehood, early gave the public opinion so violent a direction in a wrong channel that it was not possible suddenly to alter its course. This is a mighty stiff simile; but you know what I mean; and after having started it, I did not choose to give up the chase.

The members of the Convention in this city, by a majority of nine or ten to one, will be: John Jay, Robert R. Livingston, Richard Morris, John Sloss Hobart, James Duane, Isaac Roosevelt, Richard Harrison, Nicholas Low, Alexander Hamilton.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

New York, May 19, 1788.

Some days since I wrote to you, my dear sir, inclosing a letter from a Mr. Vanderkemp, etc.

I then mentioned to you that the question of a majority for or against the Constitution would depend upon the County of Albany. By the later accounts from that quarter, I fear much that the issue there has been against us.

As Clinton is truly the leader of his party, and is inflexibly obstinate, I count little on overcoming opposition by reason. Our only chances will be the previous ratification by nine States, which may shake the firmness of his followers; and a change in the sentiments of the people, which have, for some time, been travelling towards the Constitution, though the first impressions, made by every species

of influence and artifice, were too strong to be eradicated in time to give a decisive turn to the elections. We shall leave nothing undone to cultivate a favorable disposition in the citizens at large.

The language of the Anti-Federalists is, that if all the other States adopt, New York ought still to hold out. I have the most direct intelligence, but in a manner which forbids a public use being made of it, that Clinton has, in several conversations, declared his opinion of the *inutility* of the UNION. It is an unhappy reflection that the friends to it should, by quarrelling for straws among themselves, promote the designs of its adversaries. We think here that the situation of your State is critical. Let me know what you now think of it. I believe you meet nearly at the time we do. It will be of vast importance that an exact communication should be kept up between us at that period; and the moment *any decisive* question is taken, if favorable, I request you to dispatch an express to me, with pointed orders to make all possible diligence, by changing horses, etc. All expense shall be thankfully and liberally paid. I executed your commands respecting the first volume of the *Federalist*. I sent forty of the common copies and twelve of the finer ones, addressed to the care of Governor Randolph. The printer announces the second volume in a day or two, when an equal number of the two kinds shall also be forwarded. He informs that the Judicial Department—Trial by Jury—Bill of Rights, etc., is discussed in some additional papers which have not yet appeared in the *Gazettes*.

TO JOHN SULLIVAN, ESQ., PRESIDENT OF THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

NEW YORK, June 6, 1788.

DEAR SIR:

You will no doubt have understood that the Anti-federal party has prevailed in this State by a large majority. It is therefore of the utmost importance that all external circumstances should be made use of to influence their conduct. This will suggest to you the *great advantage* of a speedy decision in your State, if you can be sure of the question, and a prompt communication of the event to us. With this view, permit me to request that the instant you have taken a decisive vote in favor of the Constitution, you send an express to me at Poughkeepsie. Let him take the *shortest route* to that place, change horses on the road, and use all possible diligence. I shall with pleasure defray all expenses, and give a liberal reward to the person. As I suspect an effort will be made to precipitate us, all possible *safe* dispatch on your part, as well to obtain a decision as to communicate the intelligence of it, will be desirable.[1]

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

MY DEAR SIR: NEW YORK, June 8, 1788.

In my last, I think, I informed you that the elections had turned out, beyond expectation, favorable to the Anti-federal party. They have a majority of two thirds in the Convention, and, according to the

[1] This interesting letter, now first printed, I owe to the kindness of Mr. George Clarendon Hodges, of Boston, the possessor of the original.

best estimate I can form, of about four sevenths in the community. The views of the leaders in this city are pretty well ascertained to be turned towards a *long* adjournment—say, till next spring or summer. Their incautious ones observe that this will give an opportunity to the State to *see how* the government works, and to act according to *circumstances*.

My reasonings on the fact are to this effect: The leaders of the party hostile to the Constitution are equally hostile to the Union. They are, however, afraid to reject the Constitution at once, because that step would bring matters to a crisis between this State and the States which had adopted the Constitution, and between the parties in the State. A separation of the Southern District from the other parts of the State, it is perceived, would become the object of the Federalists and of the neighboring States. They therefore resolve upon a long adjournment as the safest and most artful course to effect their final purpose. They suppose that when the government gets into operation, it will be obliged to take some steps in respect to revenue, etc., which will furnish topics of declamation to its enemies in the several States, and will strengthen the minorities. If any considerable discontent should show itself, they will stand ready to head the opposition. If, on the contrary, the thing should go on smoothly, and the sentiments of our own people should change, they can elect to come into the Union. They, at all events, take the chances of time and the chapter of accidents.

How far their friends in the country will go with

them, I am not able to say, but, as they have always been found very obsequious, we have little reason to calculate upon an uncompliant temper in the present instance. For my own part, the more I can penetrate the views of the Anti-federal party in this State, the more I dread the consequences of the non-adoption of the Constitution by any of the other States—the more I fear an eventual disunion and civil war. God grant that Virginia may accede. The example will have a vast influence on our politics. New Hampshire, all accounts give us to expect, will be an assenting State.

The number of the volumes of the *Federalist* which you desired have been forwarded, as well the second as the first, to the care of Governor Randolph. It was impossible to correct a certain error.

In a former letter, I requested you to communicate to me, by express, the event of any decisive question in favor of the Constitution, authorizing changes of horses, etc., with an assurance to the person that he will be liberally paid for his diligence.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

DEAR SIR: POUGHKEEPSIE, June, 1788.

Your letter of the 20th came to hand two days since. I regret that your prospects are not yet reduced to greater certainty. There is more and more reason to believe that our conduct will be influenced by yours.

Our discussions have not yet travelled beyond the power of taxation. To-day we shall probably quit

this ground to pass to another. Our arguments confound, but do not convince. Some of the leaders, however, appear to be convinced by *circumstances*, and to be desirous of a retreat. This does not apply to the chief, who wishes to establish Clintonism on the basis of Anti-federalism.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

POUGHKEEPSIE, June 21, 1788.

Yesterday, my dear sir, the Convention made a House. That day and this have been spent in preliminary arrangements. To-morrow we go into a committee of the whole on the Constitution. There is every appearance that a full discussion will take place, which will keep us together at least a fortnight. It is not easy to conjecture what will be the result. Our adversaries greatly outnumber us. The leaders gave indications of a pretty desperate disposition in private conversations previous to the meeting; but I imagine the minor partisans have their scruples, and an air of moderation is now assumed. So far the thing is not despaired of. A happy issue with you must have a considerable influence upon us. I have time to add nothing more than the assurance of my sincere attachment.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

MY DEAR SIR: POUGHKEEPSIE, June 21, 1788.

I thank you for your letter of the 9th instant, and am glad to learn that you think the chance is in your

favor. I hope no disagreeable change may appear. Yet, I own I fear something from your indisposition.

Our debate here began on the clause respecting the proportion of representation, etc., which has taken up two days. To-morrow, I imagine, we shall talk about the power over elections. The only good information I can give you is, that we shall be some time together, and take the chance of events.

The object of the party at present is undoubtedly conditional amendments. What effect events may have cannot precisely be foreseen. I believe the adoption by New Hampshire is certain.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

POUGHKEEPSIE, Friday morning, June 27, 1788.

A day or two ago General Schuyler, at my request, sent forward to you an express with an account of the adoption of the Constitution by New Hampshire. We eagerly wait for further intelligence from you, as our chance of success depends upon you. There are some slight symptoms of relaxation in some of the leaders, which authorizes a gleam of hope, if you do well, but certainly I think not otherwise.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

MY DEAR SIR: July 8, 1788.

I felicitate you sincerely on the event in Virginia, but my satisfaction will be allayed if I discover too much facility in the business of amendment-making. I fear the system will be wounded in some of its vital

parts by too general a concurrence in some very injudicious recommendations. I allude more particularly to the power of taxation. The more I consider *requisition* in any shape, the more I am out of humor with it. We yesterday passed through the Constitution. To-day some definitive proposition is to be brought forward, but what, we are at a loss to judge. We have good reason to believe that our opponents are not agreed, and this affords some ground of hope. Different things are thought of—*conditions precedent*, or previous amendments; *conditions subsequent*, or the proposition of amendments, upon condition that if they are not adopted within a limited time, the State shall be at liberty to *withdraw* from the Union; and, lastly, *recommendatory amendments*. In either case, *constructive declarations* will be carried as far as possible. We will go as far as we can in the latter without invalidating the act, and will concur in rational recommendations. The rest for our opponents. We are informed there has been a disturbance in the city of Albany, on the fourth of July, which has occasioned bloodshed. The Anti-federalists were the aggressors, and the Federalists the victors. Thus stand our accounts at present. We trust, however, the matter has passed over, and tranquillity been restored.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

POUGHKEEPSIE, Saturday, July, 1788.

I thank you, my dear sir, for yours by the post. Yesterday I communicated to Duer our situation,

which I presume he will have communicated to you. It remains exactly the same. No further question having been taken, I fear the footing I mentioned to Duer is the best upon which it can be placed, but every thing possible will yet be attempted to bring the party from that stand to an unqualified ratification. Let me know your idea upon the possibility of our being received on that plan. You will understand that the only qualification will be the *reservation* of a right to recede in case our amendments have not been decided upon in one of the modes pointed out by the Constitution, within a certain number of years, perhaps five or seven. If this can, in the first instance, be admitted as a ratification, I do not fear any further consequences. Congress will, I presume, recommend certain amendments to render the *structure* of the government more secure. This will satisfy the more considerate and honest opposers of the Constitution, and with the aid of them will break up the party.

TO NATHANIEL CHIPMAN [1]

SIR: POUGHKEEPSIE, July 22, 1788.

Your brother delivered me your favor, which I received with pleasure, as the basis of a correspondence that may be productive of public good.

[1] Nathaniel Chipman, of Vermont, was born in Connecticut, in 1752, and died in 1843. He was a soldier of the Revolution and a distinguished lawyer and statesman. He was Chief-Justice of Vermont and Senator from that State. The letter to which this is a reply related to the question of the New York grants. In 1789 Mr. Chipman was appointed to settle the differences with New York, and two years later was one of the Commissioners to arrange for the admission of Vermont into the Union.

The accession of Vermont to the Confederacy is, doubtless, an object of great importance to the whole; and it appears to me that this is the favorable moment for effecting it upon the best terms for all concerned. Besides mere general reasons, there are circumstances of the moment which will forward a proper arrangement. One of the first subjects of deliberation with the new Congress will be the independence of Kentucky, for which the Southern States will be anxious. The Northern will be glad to send a counterpoise in Vermont. These mutual interests and inclinations will facilitate a proper result.

I see nothing that can stand in your way but the interfering claims under the grants of New York. As to taxation, the natural operation of the new system will place you exactly where you might wish to be. The public debt, as far as it can prudently be provided for, will be by the Western lands and the appropriation of some general fund. *There will be no distribution of it to particular parts of the community.* The fund will be sought for in indirect taxation; as for a number of years, and except in time of war, direct taxes would be an impolitic measure. Hence, as you can have no objection to your proportion of contribution as consumers, you can fear nothing from the article of taxation.

I readily conceive that it will hardly be practicable to you to come into the Union, unless you are secured from claims under New York grants. Upon the whole, therefore, I think it will be expedient for you, as early as possible, to ratify the Constitution,

"upon condition that Congress shall provide for the extinguishment of all existing claims to land under grants of the State of New York, which may interfere with claims under the grants of the State of Vermont." You will do well to conform your boundary to that heretofore marked out by Congress, otherwise insuperable difficulties would be likely to arise with this State.

I should think it altogether unadvisable to annex any other conditions to your ratification, for there is scarcely any of the amendments proposed that will not have a party opposed to it, and there are several that will meet with a very strong opposition; and it would, therefore, be highly inexpedient for you to embarrass your main object by any collateral difficulties.

As I write in Convention, I have it not in my power to enlarge. You will perceive my general ideas on the subject. I will only add that it will be wise to lay as little impediment as possible in the way of your reception into the Union.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

DEAR SIR: POUGHKEEPSIE, July 22, 1788.

I wrote to you by the last post, since which nothing material has turned up here. We are debating on amendments without having decided what is to be done with them. There is so great a diversity in the views of our opponents that it is impossible to predict any thing. Upon the whole, however, our fears diminish.

TO WASHINGTON

NEW YORK, August 13, 1788.

SIR:

Capt. Cochran of the British navy has requested my aid in recovering a family watch worn by his brother, who fell at Yorktown, and now in the possession of Gen. Morgan. In compliance with his request I have written the letter herewith to Gen. Morgan, which I take the liberty to convey through you, in hope that if you see no impropriety in it, you would add your influence to the endeavor to gratify Capt. Cochran. It is one of those things in which the affections are apt to be interested, beyond the value of the object, and in which one naturally feels an inclination to oblige.

I have delivered to Mr. Madison, to be forwarded to you, a set of the papers under the signature of Publius,[1] neatly enough bound to be honored with a place in your library. I presume you have understood that the writers of these papers are chiefly Mr. Madison and myself, with some aid from Mr. Jay.

I take it for granted, sir, you have concluded to comply with what will no doubt be the general call of your country in relation to the new government. You will permit me to say that it is indispensable you should lend yourself to its first operations. It is of little purpose to have *introduced* a system, if the weightiest influence is not given to its firm *establishment* in the outset.

[1] These papers constituted *The Federalist*.

TO SAMUEL BROOME [1]

NEW YORK, August 16, 1788.

DEAR SIR:

I have this moment received your letter of the thirteenth instant, and am sorry that the rules of propriety in respect to my situation as a member of Congress will not permit my acting in the capacity you wish.

My situation for some time past has prevented my acknowledging one or two of your favors, which have been duly handed to me. I recollect that one of them contains an inquiry concerning your son, to which you will naturally desire an answer. My public avocations for some time past have put it out of my power to ascertain the progress he has made—though I expect when I shall be enough disengaged to examine, to find it a good one; it cannot fail to be so if his diligence has been equal to his capacity. I shall shortly write you further on the subject.

TO GOVERNOR WM. LIVINGSTON

NEW YORK, August 29, 1788.

DEAR SIR:

We are informed here that there is some probability that your Legislature will instruct your delegates to vote for Philadelphia as the place of the meeting of the first Congress under the new government. I presume this information can hardly be well founded, as upon my calculations there is not a

[1] A New York merchant, and one of the well-known family of that name.

State in the Union so much interested in having the temporary residence at New York as New Jersey.

As between Philadelphia and New York, I am mistaken if a greater proportion of your State will not be benefited by having the seat of government at the latter than the former place.

If at the latter, too, its exposed and eccentric position will necessitate the early establishment of a permanent seat, and in passing south it is highly probable the government would light upon the Delaware in New Jersey. The Northern States do not wish to increase Pennsylvania by an accession of all the wealth and population of the federal city. Pennsylvania herself, when not seduced by *immediate possession*, will be glad to concur in a situation on the Jersey side of the Delaware. Here are at once a majority of the States; but place the government once down in Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania will, of course, hold fast; the State of Delaware will do the same.

All the States south, looking forward to the time when the balance of population will enable them to carry the government further south (say to the Potomac), and being accommodated in the meantime as well as they wish, will concur in no change. The government, from the delay, will take root in Philadelphia, and Jersey will lose all prospect of the federal city within her limits.

These appear to me calculations so obvious that I cannot persuade myself New Jersey will so much *oversee* her interest as to fall, in the present instance, into the snares of Pennsylvania.

TO WASHINGTON

DEAR SIR: NEW YORK, September, 1788.

Your Excellency's friendly and obliging letter of the 28th ultimo came safely to hand. I thank you for your assurance of seconding my application to General Morgan. The truth of that affair is that he purchased the watch for a trifle of a British soldier, who plundered Major Cochran at the moment of his fall at Yorktown.

I should be deeply pained, my dear sir, if your scruples in regard to a certain station should be matured into a resolution to decline it, though I am neither surprised at their existence, nor can I but agree in opinion that the caution you observe in deferring an ultimate determination is prudent. I have, however, reflected maturely on the subject, and have come to a conclusion (in which I feel no hesitation), that every public and personal consideration will demand from you an acquiescence in what will *certainly* be the unanimous wish of your country. The absolute retreat which you meditated at the close of the late war was natural and proper. Had the government produced by the Revolution gone on in a *tolerable* train, it would have been most advisable to have persisted in that retreat. But I am clearly of opinion that the crisis which brought you again into public view left you no alternative but to comply, and I am equally clear in the opinion that you are by that act *pledged* to take a part in the execution of the government. I am not less convinced that the impression of this necessity of your filling the

station in question is so universal that you run no risk of any uncandid imputation by submitting to it. But even if this were not the case, a regard to your own reputation, as well as to the public good, calls upon you in the strongest manner to run that risk.

It cannot be considered as a compliment to say that on your acceptance of the office of President the success of the new government in its commencement may materially depend. Your agency and influence will be not less important in preserving it from the future attacks of its enemies than they have been in recommending it in the first instance to the adoption of the people. Independent of all considerations drawn from this source, the point of light in which you stand at home and abroad will make an infinite difference in the respectability with which the government will begin its operations in the alternative of your being or not being at the head of it. I forbear to urge considerations which might have a more personal application. What I have said will suffice for the inferences I mean to draw.

First. In a matter so essential to the well-being of society as the prosperity of a newly-instituted government, a citizen of so much consequence as yourself to its success has no option but to lend his services if called for. Permit me to say it would be inglorious in such a situation not to hazard the glory, however great, which he might have previously acquired.

Secondly. Your signature to the proposed system pledges your judgment for its being such a one as, upon the whole, was worthy of the public approbation.

If it should miscarry (as men commonly decide from success, or the want of it), the blame will, in all probability, be laid on the system itself, and the framers of it will have to encounter the disrepute of having brought about a revolution in government, without substituting any thing that was worthy of the effort. They pulled down one Utopia, it will be said, to build up another. This view of the subject if I mistake not, my dear sir, will suggest to your mind greater hazard to that fame, which must be and ought to be dear to you, in refusing your future aid to the system than in affording it. I will only add that, in my estimate of the matter, that aid is indispensable.

I have taken the liberty to express these sentiments, and to lay before you my view of the subject. I doubt not the considerations mentioned have fully occurred to you, and I trust they will finally produce in your mind the same result which exists in mine. I flatter myself the frankness with which I have delivered myself will not be displeasing to you. It has been prompted by motives which you would not disapprove. The letter inclosed in yours was immediately forwarded.

TO THEODORE SEDGWICK [1]

NEW YORK, October 9, 1788.

I thank you, my dear sir, for your obliging congratulations on the event towards effecting which

[1] Theodore Sedgwick, of Massachusetts, afterwards member of Congress, Speaker of the House, and a judge of the Supreme Court of his native State. He was a staunch Federalist and an ardent friend of Hamilton.

your aid as a joint laborer was so essential. I hope experience may show that, while it promotes the interest of this place, it will not be incompatible with public good. We are making efforts to prepare handsome accommodations for the session of the new Congress.

On the subject of Vice-President, my ideas have concurred with yours, and I believe Mr. Adams will have the votes of this State. He will certainly, I think, be preferred to the other gentleman. Yet *certainly* is perhaps too strong a word. I can conceive that the other, who is supposed to be a more pliable man, may command Anti-federal influence.

The only hesitation in my mind with regard to Mr. Adams has arisen within a day or two from a suggestion by a particular gentleman that he is unfriendly in his sentiments to General Washington. Richard H. Lee, who will probably, as rumor now runs, come from Virginia, is also in this style. The Lees and Adamses have been in the habit of uniting, and hence may spring up a cabal very embarrassing to the Executive, and of course to the administration of the government. Consider this—sound the reality of it, and let me hear from you.

What think you of Lincoln or Knox? This is a flying thought.

TO NATHANIEL CHIPMAN

1788.

SIR:

Your favor of the 6th of September has been duly handed to me, and I receive great pleasure from the

hopes you appear to entertain of a favorable turn of affairs in Vermont in regard to the new government. It is certainly an object of mutual importance to yourselves, and to the Union, and well deserves the best endeavors of every discerning and good man.

I observe with satisfaction your opinion that Vermont will not make a point of introducing amendments. I mean as a condition of her accession. That ground would be the most hazardous which she could venture upon, as it is very probable that such amendments as might be popular with you would be deemed inadmissible by the friends of the system, who will doubtless be the most influential persons in the national councils; and who would rather submit to the inconvenience of your being out of the Union, till circumstances should alter, than consent to any thing that might impair the energy of the government. The article of taxation is, above all, the most delicate thing to meddle with; for as *plenary* power in that respect must ever be considered as the vital principle of government, no abridgment or constitutional suspension of that power can ever, upon mature consideration, be countenanced by the intelligent friends of an effective national government. You must, as I remarked in my former letter, rely upon the natural course of things, which I am satisfied will exempt you in ordinary times from direct taxation, on account of the difficulty of exercising it in so extensive a country, so peculiarly situated, with advantage to the revenue or satisfaction to the people. Though this difficulty

will be gradually diminished from various causes, a considerable time must first elapse; and, in the interim, you will have nothing to apprehend on this score.

As far as indirect taxation is concerned, it will be impossible to exempt you from sharing in the burthen, nor can it be desired by your citizens. I repeat these ideas to impress you the more strongly with my sense of the danger of touching this chord, and of the impolicy of perplexing the main object with any such collateral experiments, while I am glad to perceive that you do not think your people will be tenacious on the point.

It will be useless for you to have any view in your act to the present Congress. They can of course do nothing in the matter. All you will have to do will be to pass an act of accession to the new Constitution, on the conditions on which you mean to rely. It will then be for the new government, when met, to declare whether you can be received on your own terms or not.

I am sorry to find that the affair of boundary is likely to create some embarrassment. Men's minds, everywhere out of your State, are made up upon and reconciled to that which has been delineated by Congress. Any departure from it must beget new discussions, in which all the passions will have their usual scope, and may occasion greater impediments than the real importance of the thing would justify. If, however, the further claims you state cannot be gotten over with you, I would still wish to see the experiment made, though with this clog, because I have

it very much at heart that you should become a member of the Confederacy. It is, however, not to be inferred that the same disposition will actuate everybody. In this State, the pride of certain individuals has too long triumphed over the public interest; and in several of the Southern States a jealousy of Northern influence will prevent any great zeal for increasing in the national councils the number of Northern votes.

I mention these circumstances (though I dare say they will have occurred to you), to show you the necessity of moderation and caution on your part, and the error of any sanguine calculation upon a disposition to receive you at any rate. A supposition of this nature might lead to fatal mistakes.

In the event of an extension of your boundary beyond the Congressional line, would it be impracticable for you to have commissioners appointed to adjust any differences which might arise? I presume the principal object with you in the extension of your boundary would be to cover some private interests. This might be matter of negotiation.

There is one thing which I think it proper to mention to you, about which I have some doubt—that is, whether a legislative accession would be deemed valid. It is the policy of the system to lay its foundations in the *immediate* consent of the people. You will best judge how far it is safe or practicable to have recourse to a convention. Whatever you do, no time ought to be lost. The present moment is undoubtedly critically favorable. Let it by all means be improved.

TO THEODORE SEDGWICK

NEW YORK, November 9, 1788.

MY DEAR SIR:

Your last letter but one met me at Albany attending court, from whence I am but just returned. Yours of the 2d inst. is this moment handed me.

I am very sorry for the schism you hint at among the Federalists, but I have so much confidence in the good management of the fast friends of the Constitution, that I hope no ill consequences will ensue from that disagreement. It will, however, be worthy of great care to avoid suffering a difference of opinion on collateral points, to produce any serious division between those who have hitherto drawn together on the great national question.

Permit me to add that I do not think you should allow any line to be run between those who wish to trust alterations to future experience, and those who are desirous of them at the present juncture. The rage for amendments is in my *opinion* rather to be parried by address than encountered with open force. And I shall therefore be loth to learn that your parties have been arranged professedly upon the distinction I have mentioned. The *mode* in which amendments may best be made, and twenty other matters, may serve as pretexts for avoiding the evil and securing the good.

On the question between Mr. H.[1] and Mr. A.,[2] Mr. King will probably have informed you that I

[1] John Hancock.

[2] John Adams. The question was which of these two should be supported for the Vice-Presidency.

have, upon the whole, concluded that the latter ought to be supported. My measures will be taken accordingly. I had but one scruple, but after mature consideration, I have relinquished it. Mr. A., to a sound understanding, has always appeared to me to add an ardent love for the public good, and, as his further knowledge of the world seems to have corrected those jealousies which he is represented to have once been influenced by, I trust nothing of the kind suggested in my former letter will disturb the harmony of the administration. Let me continue to hear from you, and believe me to be, with very great esteem and regard, etc.

TO WASHINGTON

DEAR SIR: November 18, 1788.

Your last two letters have duly come to hand, and the Count de Moustier has delivered me the watch you committed to his charge. Your obliging attention to this matter claims my particular acknowledgments. I will make no apology for asking you to take the additional trouble of forwarding the enclosed to the General. I take the liberty of passing it through you, that you may, by perusing the contents, know the situation of the business.

The demand of fifty guineas is to me quite unexpected. I am sorry to add that there is too good evidence that it cost a mere trifle to the General. This, however, I mention in confidence. Nor shall I give you any further trouble on the subject. Whatever may be proper will be done.

Mrs. Hamilton requests her affectionate remembrances to Mrs. Washington, and joins me in the best wishes for you both.

P. S.—Your last letter, on a certain subject, I have received. I feel a conviction that you will finally see your acceptance to be indispensable. It is no compliment to say that no other man can sufficiently unite the public opinion or can give the requisite weight to the office in the commencement of the government. These considerations appear to me of themselves decisive. I am not sure that your refusal would not throw every thing into confusion. I am sure that it would have the worst effect imaginable. Indeed, as I hinted in a former letter, I think circumstances leave no option.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

NEW YORK, November 23, 1788.

I thank you, my dear sir, for yours of the 20th. The only part of it which surprises me is what you mention respecting Clinton. I cannot, however, believe that the plan will succeed. Nor, indeed, do I think that Clinton would be disposed to exchange his present appointment for that office, or risk his popularity by holding both. At the same time the attempt merits attention, and ought not to be neglected as chimerical or impracticable.

In Massachusetts the Electors will, I understand, be appointed by the Legislature, and will be all Federal, and 't is probable will be, for the most part,

in favor of Adams. It is said the same thing will happen in New Hampshire, and, I have reason to believe, it will be the case in Connecticut. In this State it is difficult to form any certain calculation. A large majority of the *Assembly* was doubtless of an Anti-federal complexion, but the schism in the party, which has been occasioned by the falling off of some of its leaders in the Convention, leaves me not without hope that, if matters are well managed, we may procure a majority for some pretty equal compromise. In the Senate we have the superiority by one. In New Jersey there seems to be no question but that the complexion of the Electors will be Federal, and I suppose, if thought expedient, they may be united in favor of Adams. Pennsylvania you can best judge of. From Delaware, Maryland, and South Carolina, I presume, we may count with tolerable assurance on Federal men; and I should imagine, if pains are taken, the danger of an Anti-federal Vice-President might itself be rendered the instrument of Union. At any rate, their weight will not be thrown into the scale of Clinton, and I do not see from what quarter numbers can be marshalled in his favor equal to those who will advocate Adams, supposing even a division in the Federal votes.

On the whole I have concluded to support Adams, though I am not without apprehensions on the score we have conversed about. My principal reasons are these: First, he is a declared partisan of deferring to future experience the expediency of amendments in the system, and (although I do not altogether

adopt this sentiment) it is much nearer my own than certain other doctrines. Secondly, he is certainly a character of importance in the Eastern States; if he is not Vice-President, one of two worse things will be likely to happen. Either he must be nominated to some important office, for which he is less proper, or will become a malcontent, and give additional weight to the opposition to the government. As to Knox, I cannot persuade myself that he will incline to the appointment. He must *sacrifice* emolument by it, which must be of *necessity* a primary object with him.

If it should be thought expedient to endeavor to unite on a particular character, there is a danger of a different kind to which we must not be inattentive—the possibility of rendering it doubtful who is appointed President. You know the Constitution has not provided the means of distinguishing in certain cases, and it would be disagreeable to have a man treading close upon the heels of the person we wish as President. May not the malignity of the opposition be, in some instances, exhibited even against him? Of all this we shall best judge when we know who are our Electors; and we must, in our different circles, take our measures accordingly.

I could console myself for what you mention respecting yourself, from a desire to see you in one of the executive departments, did I not perceive the representation will be defective in characters of a certain description. Wilson is evidently out of the question. King tells me he does not believe he will be elected into either House. Mr. Gouverneur Morris

set out to-day for France, by way of Philadelphia. If you are not in one of the branches, the government may sincerely feel the want of men who unite to zeal all the requisite qualifications for parrying the machinations of its enemies. Might I advise, it would be, that you bent your course to Virginia.

TO THEODORE SEDGWICK

New York, January 29, 1789.

My Dear Sir:

I thank you for your two letters of the 4th and 7th instant which arrived here during my absence at Albany, from which place I have but recently returned. I believe you may be perfectly tranquil on the subject of Mr. Adams' election. It seems to be certain that all the Middle States will vote for him to Delaware inclusively, and probably Maryland. In the South there are no candidates thought of but Rutledge and Clinton. The latter will have the votes of Virginia, and it is *possible* some in South Carolina. Maryland will certainly not vote for Clinton, and New York, from our Legislature having by their contentions let slip the day, will not vote at all. For the last circumstance I am not sorry, as the most we could hope would be to balance accounts and do no harm. The Anti-federalists incline to an appointment notwithstanding, but I discourage it with the Federalists. Under these circumstances I see not how any person can come near Mr. Adams—that is, taking it for granted that he will unite the votes in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. I ex-

pect that the federal votes in Virginia, if any, will be in favor of Adams.

You will probably have heard that our Legislature has passed a bill for electing representatives. The Houses continue to disagree about senators, and I fear a compromise will be impracticable. I do not, however, entirely lose hope. In this situation you will see we have much to apprehend respecting the seat of government. The Pennsylvanians are endeavoring to bring their forces early in the field—I hope our friends in the North will not be behindhand. On many accounts, indeed, it appears to be important that there be an appearance of zeal and punctuality in coming forward to set the government in motion.

I shall learn with definite pleasure that you are a representative. As to me, this will not be the case—I believe, from my own disinclination of the thing. We shall, however, I flatter myself, have a couple of Federalists.

TO RUFUS KING

ALBANY, July 15, 1789.

MY DEAR SIR:

I received your letter by the last post but one. I immediately set about circulating an idea that it would be injurious to the city to have Duane elected, as the probability was some very unfit character would be his successor. My object was to have this sentiment communicated to our members. But a stop was put to my measures by a letter received

from Burr, announcing that at a general meeting of the Federalists of both Houses, Schuyler and Duane had been determined upon in a manner that precluded future attempts.

I find, however, by a letter from General Schuyler, received this day, that L'Hommedieu and Morris may spoil all. Troup tells me that L'Hommedieu is opposed to you. He made our friend Benson believe that he would even relinquish himself for you. What does all this mean?

Certain matters here, about which we have so often talked, remain *in statu quo*.[1]

[1] For this letter, now first printed, I am indebted to the kindness of Dr. Charles King, the possessor of the King papers. It is a very interesting letter, because it relates to the struggle over the election of United States Senators from New York, which kept New York without representation in the Senate during the first session of Congress, and which by its results had such an important influence on the party politics of the time. Hamilton desired Schuyler and Rufus King to be Senators. The Livingstons, who led and represented an important part of the Federalists, cheerfully conceded Schuyler, but wished the other to be a member of their faction. There was no question as to King's ability and distinction as a statesman, but he had just come to New York from Massachusetts, and was a comparative stranger. The wish of the Livingstons was perfectly right and reasonable, and every consideration of party wisdom urged the importance of gratifying them. Whether they would have been satisfied with Duane is not clear. Both L'Hommedieu and Gouverneur Morris were at one time in the field. Ezra L'Hommedieu was an able politician, and the originator of the measure for the State University. Hamilton however declined to yield. A protracted struggle followed, and Schuyler and King were chosen. At the expiration of Schuyler's term of two years, Burr was elected in his stead, the Livingstons were hopelessly and finally alienated, the State became doubtful, and was finally lost to the Federalists. It was one of the instances in which Hamilton's bold, imperious temper, which made him so strong as a statesman and administrator, led him into a fatal error as a politician. The Robert Troup referred to was an adroit politician and great friend of Hamilton. I have one of his letters written at this time, which exhibits the details of the contest of which I have given an outline. — Ed.

TO OLIVER WOLCOTT

New York, September 13, 1789.

Sir:

It is with pleasure I am able to inform you that you have been appointed Auditor in the Department of the Treasury. The salary of this office is fifteen hundred dollars. Your friends having expressed a doubt of your acceptance, I cannot forbear saying that I shall be happy to find the doubt has been ill-founded, as from the character I have received of you I am persuaded you will be an acquisition to the department. I need scarcely add that your presence here as soon as possible is essential to the progress of business.[1]

TO LAFAYETTE

New York, October 6, 1789.

My Dear Marquis:

I have seen, with a mixture of pleasure and apprehension, the progress of the events which have lately taken place in your country. As a friend to mankind and to liberty, I rejoice in the efforts which you are making to establish it, while I fear much for the final success of the attempts, for the fate of those I esteem who are engaged in it, and for the danger, in case of success, of innovations greater than will consist with the real felicity of your nation. If your affairs still go well when this reaches you, you will

[1] This letter is reprinted from Gibbs' *Administrations of Washington and Adams*, i., 2. Oliver Wolcott of Connecticut accepted the office of Auditor here offered him, and succeeded Hamilton as Secretary of the Treasury.

ask why this foreboding of ill, when all the appearances have been so much in your favor. I will tell you. I dread disagreements among those who are now united (which will be likely to be improved by the adverse party) about the nature of your constitution; I dread the vehement character of your people, whom I fear you may find it more easy to bring on, than to keep within proper bounds after you have put them in motion; I dread the interested refractoriness of your nobles, who cannot be gratified, and who may be unwilling to submit to the requisite sacrifices. And I dread the reveries of your philosophic politicians, who appear in the moment to have great influence, and who, being mere speculatists, may aim at more refinement than suits either with human nature or the composition of your nation.

These, my dear Marquis, are my apprehensions. My wishes for your personal success and that of the cause of liberty are incessant. Be virtuous amidst the seductions of ambition, and you can hardly in any event be unhappy. You are combined with a great and good man; you will anticipate the name of Neckar. I trust you and he will never cease to harmonize.

You will, I presume, have heard before this gets to hand, that I have been appointed to the head of the finances of this country. This event, I am sure, will give you pleasure. In undertaking the task I hazard much, but I thought it an occasion that called upon me to hazard. I have no doubt that the reasonable expectation of the public may be satis-

fied, if I am properly supported by the Legislature, and in this respect I stand at present on the most encouraging footing.

The debt due to France will be among the first objects of my attention. Hitherto it has been from necessity neglected. The session of Congress is now over. It has been exhausted in the organization of the government and in a few laws of immediate urgency respecting navigation and commercial imposts. The subject of the debt, foreign and domestic, has been referred to the next session, which will commence the first Monday in January, with an instruction to me to prepare and report a plan comprehending an adequate provision for the support of the public credit. There were many good reasons for a temporary adjournment.

From this sketch you will perceive that I am not in a situation to address any thing officially to your administration; but I venture to say to you, as my friend, that if the installments of the principal of the debt could be suspended for a few years, it would be a valuable accommodation to the United States. In this suggestion, I contemplate a speedy payment of the *arrears* of *interest* now due, and effectual provision for the punctual payment of future interest as it arises. Could an arrangement of this sort meet the approbation of your government, it would be best on every account that the offer should come unsolicited as a fresh mark of good-will.

I wrote you last by Mr. De Warville. I presume you received my letter. As it touched upon some delicate topics I should be glad to know its fate.

P. S.—The latest accounts from France have abated some of my apprehensions. The abdications of privileges patronized by your nobility in the States-General are truly noble, and bespeak a patriotic and magnanimous policy which promises good both to them and their country.

TO JAMES MADISON, JR.

October 12, 1789.

I thank you, my dear sir, for the line you were so obliging as to leave for me, and the loan of the book accompanying it, in which I have not made sufficient progress to judge of its merit. I don't know how it was, but I took it for granted that you had left town earlier than I did; else I should have found an opportunity, after your adjournment, to converse with you on the subjects committed to me by the House of Representatives. It is certainly important that a plan as complete and as unexceptionable as possible should be matured by the next meeting of Congress; and for this purpose it could not but be useful that there should be a comparison and concentration of ideas, of those whose duty leads them to a contemplation of the subject. As I lost the opportunity of a personal communication, may I ask of your friendship, to put to paper and send me your thoughts on such objects as may have occurred to you, for an addition to our revenue, and also as to any modifications of the public debt, which could be made consistent with good faith—the interest of the public and of the creditors.

In my opinion, in considering plans for the increase of our revenue, the difficulty lies not so much in the want of objects as in prejudice, which may be feared with regard to almost every object. The question is very much, What further taxes will be least unpopular? [1]

TO WASHINGTON

New York, October 20, 1789.

Sir:

Agreeably to your desire I sit down to commit a few lines to the post.

Nothing worth particular mention has occurred since your departure, except a report brought by Mr. Keane from South Carolina, that Mr. McGillivray, the Indian chief, has, after a short conference, left our commissioners, declaring that what they suggested was only a repetition of the old story, and inadmissible, or something to that effect. It is added that the Lower Creeks appeared, notwithstanding, willing to go into a treaty, but the Upper ones declined it. General Knox, who has particularly conversed with Mr. Keane, will doubtless give you a more accurate statement of what he brings. It seems, however, that he has his intelligence at second- or third-hand.

P. S.—I have just seen a letter from a private gentleman of considerable intelligence now in North Carolina, who gives an ill picture of the prospect there, respecting the adoption of the Constitution.

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, iv., 60.

TO TIMOTHY PICKERING

SIR: TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Nov. 19, 1789.

In the estimate laid before Congress at their last sessions, I included as an anticipation of the late Superintendent of Finance the amount of a draft issued by him in your favor on the late Receiver of Taxes for the State of New York, for fifty thousand dollars, no part of which appears to have been paid.

The circumstances attending this anticipation not being sufficiently known by the Legislature, prevented (as I presume) a provision being made for it. It will be therefore necessary for you to inform me particularly of the nature and circumstances attending this anticipation, and particularly whether there are any points respecting the claims under it which give the parties a right to expect payment for them in specie, whilst so many debts in your department appear to have been discharged by certificates.

I wish likewise to know whether any or what part of these claims may have been settled by the different State commissioners, and what mode can be adopted for ascertaining them should the Legislature think proper to make a provision for it.[1]

TO COL. R. H. HARRISON [2]

MY DEAR FRIEND: NEW YORK, Nov. 27, 1789.

After having labored with you in the common cause of America during the late war, and having

[1] Now first printed from the Pickering papers in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

[2] Col. Robert Hanson Harrison, of Maryland, one of Washington's aides-de-camp, familiarly known as the "Old Secretary."

learned your value, judge of the pleasure I feel in the prospect of a reunion of efforts in this same cause, for I consider the business of America's happiness as yet to be done.

In proportion to that sentiment has been my disappointment at learning that you had declined a seat on the bench of the United States. Cannot your determination, my dear friend, be reconsidered?

One of your objections, I think, will be removed; I mean that which relates to the nature of the establishment. Many concur in opinion that its present form is inconvenient, if not impracticable. Should an alteration take place, your other objection will also be removed; for you can then be nearly as much at home as you are now.

If it is possible, my dear Harrison, give yourself to us. We want men like you. They are rare at all times. Adieu.

TO HENRY LEE [1]

NEW YORK, December 1, 1789.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I have received your letter of the 16th inst. I am sure you are sincere when you say that you would not subject me to an impropriety; nor do I know that there would be any in my answering your queries. But you remember the saying with regard to Cæsar's wife. I think the spirit of it applicable to every man concerned in the administration of the

[1] Henry Lee, of Virginia, one of the most dashing soldiers of the Revolution, and best known by his soubriquet of "Light-Horse Harry."

finance of a country. With respect to the conduct of such men, *suspicion* is ever eagle-eyed. And the most innocent things are apt to be misinterpreted.

Be assured of the affection and friendship of, etc.

TO WILLIAM DUER

1790.

While I truly regret, my dear friend, that the necessity of your situation compels you to relinquish a station [1] in which public and personal considerations combine to induce me to wish your continuance, I cannot but be sensible of the force of the motives by which you are determined. And I interest myself in your happiness too sincerely not to acquiesce in whatever may redound to your advantage. I confess, too, that *upon reflection* I cannot help thinking you have decided rightly.

I count with confidence on your future friendship, as you may on mine.

An engagement at the President's will not let me meet you at dinner, but I shall be happy to see you in the evening. Adieu. God bless you, and give you the success for which you will always have my warmest wishes.

[1] William Duer was Secretary of the old Treasury Board, and served as Assistant Secretary of the Treasury with Hamilton until 1790. This letter is dated 1789 in the edition of 1850, but as it refers to Duer's retirement from office, could not have been written until the beginning of the following year.

TO ÆDANUS BURKE [1]

SIR: NEW YORK, April 1, 1790.

I have been informed that in the House of Representatives yesterday, you made use of some very harsh expressions in relation to me.

As I cannot but ascribe so unprovoked an attack to misapprehension or misrepresentation, I have concluded to send you an extract from the eulogium pronounced by me on Gen. Greene, of the part to which alone your animadversions could relate.

It is in these words:

"From the heights of Monmouth I might lead you to the *plains of Springfield*, there to behold the veteran Knyphaussen, at the head of a veteran army, baffled and almost beaten by a general without an army, aided—or rather embarrassed—by small fugitive bodies of volunteer militia, the *mimicry of soldiership*."

From this you will perceive that the epithets to which you have taken exception are neither applicable to the militia of South Carolina in particular, nor to *militia* in general, but merely to "*small fugitive* bodies of *volunteer* militia."

Having thus, sir, stated the matter in its true light, it remains for you to judge what conduct, in consequence of the explanation, will be proper on your part.[2]

[1] Member of Congress from South Carolina from 1789–1791. He was a distinguished lawyer, a judge, and, at the end of his life, Chancellor of his State. There is no speech by Mr. Burke reported in the *Annals of Congress* for March 31, 1790.

[2] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO TIMOTHY PICKERING

NEW YORK, May 13, 1790.

DEAR SIR:

The offer of your service as successor to Mr. Duer reached me in due time.

I can with truth assure you that you were one of a very small number who held a competition in my judgment, and that had personal considerations alone influenced me, I could with difficulty have preferred another. Reasons of a peculiar nature, however, have determined my choice towards Mr. Tench Coxe, who to great industry and very good talents adds an extensive theoretical and practical knowledge of trade.

Allow me to say that, knowing as I now do your views to public life, I shall, from conviction of your worth, take pleasure in promoting them—and I hope an opportunity will not be long wanting.[1]

TO WINN

SIR: TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Sept. 18, 1790.

Mr. Justin Foote has delivered at this office a commission from the President of the United States, vesting you with the office of Surveyor of the Port of Winton in North Carolina. This gentleman informed me that he was not charged with any letter of resignation from you, but stated the substance of your verbal communication to him at the time.

[1] Now first printed from the Pickering papers in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Soon after this Col. Pickering was made Postmaster-General.

Passing over the obligation of every good citizen to deport himself with due respect to the Chief Magistrate, and especially of those to whom he and the Senate may have previously given indications of confidence, which I am persuaded you would not intentionally deviate from, I beg leave to observe that questions may be raised whether the return of a commission is all that is requisite from gentlemen who decline an appointment to a public trust. Under these circumstances, I find myself constrained to request that you will make known to the President, in a regular way, your intentions as to your late appointment.

TO WASHINGTON

SIR: NEW YORK, September 21, 1790.

Doctor Craigie has communicated to me a letter from Mr. Daniel Parker to him, dated London, the 12th of July, which mentions that he had just seen Mr. De Miranda, who had recently conversed with the Marquis del Campo, from whom he had learnt that the Court of Spain had acceded to our right of navigating the Mississippi.

Col. Smith has also read to me a passage out of another letter of the 6th of July, which mentions that orders had been sent to the Viceroy of Mexico and the Governor of New Orleans not to interrupt the passage of vessels of the United States through that river.

It is probable that other communications will have ascertained to you whether there be any and what

foundation for this intelligence; but I have thought it advisable, notwithstanding, to impart it to you.

The reports from Europe favor more and more the idea of peace. They are, however, not conclusive, and not entirely correspondent.

Captain Watson, of the ship *New York*, who left London the 28th of July, and Torbay the 16th or 17th of August, informs that the evening preceding her departure from Torbay he was informed by different officers of the fleet that peace between Britain and Spain had taken place, and had been notified by Mr. Pitt in a letter to the Lord Mayor of London, of which an account had arrived *that evening*. He had, however, seen no papers concerning the account, and the press of seamen had continued down to the same evening.

On the other hand, Captain Hunter, of the ship *George*, who left St. Andero the 8th of August, affirms that vigorous preparations for war were still going on at that port.

TO WASHINGTON

SIR: NEW YORK, September 29, 1790.

I have been duly honored with your two letters of the 18th and 20th of September.

My opinion on a certain subject has been forwarded, and I hope will ere this have come to hand.

Inclosed you will be pleased to receive a list of such characters as, from the documents furnished by Mr. Lear, from my inquiries, and from the intimations contained in your letter of the 20th, appear to

stand, upon the whole, fairest for the command of the revenue boats, except for the stations of North Carolina and Georgia concerning which there is no satisfactory information.

Captain Montgomery is said to have, on some accounts, greater pretensions to respectability than Captain Roach (though both are represented to be men of merit), and *something like* claim to preference from situation.

Mr. Gross is submitted on the recommendation of Captain Barney, who mentions favorably both him and a Mr. Daniel Porter, naming Gross first, but without expressing a preference of either.

The Vice-President put into my hand a day or two ago the inclosed letters concerning Captain Lyde, but as Williams, who is recommended by Governor Hancock, is also warmly recommended by General Lincoln, the evidence in his favor may be deemed to preponderate.

The manifest expediency of the previous nomination or appointment of the persons who are to command the boats to oversee the building and equipping of them will suspend the further execution of the business till your pleasure as to persons shall be signified.

The subaltern officers can be appointed at greater leisure, for which purpose I am collecting information, as I am also doing in respect to commanders for the two boats destined for North Carolina and Georgia; but I presume the others need not be delayed on this account.

P. S.—The British packet is just arrived. The

rumor is, that the declarations in the inclosed paper were regarded as the prelude of peace; but that the matter was not considered as finished, and, accordingly, the press of seamen had continued with as much vivacity as before. In the letter from the Minister to the Lord Mayor, these declarations seemed to be regarded in the above-mentioned light. The letter says, the negotiators were about to proceed to the discussion of the other matters in dispute with a view to a definite arrangement.

TO WASHINGTON

SIR: NEW YORK, October 17, 1790.

I had the honor of receiving your letter of the 10th inst. by the last post. It is certainly very possible, that motives different from the one avowed may have produced a certain communication; and in matters of such a nature it is not only allowable, but the dictate of prudence, to receive suggestions with peculiar caution.

A British packet arrived yesterday. The accounts she brings are all of a warlike aspect. I have extracted from an English paper the inclosed decree of the National Assembly of France; which, though of a qualified tenor, looks pretty directly towards the eventual supporting of Spain. The English papers hold it up as a decisive indication of a disposition to do so. And it is said, in some of the letters which have been received, that positive orders have been sent to Lord Howe to fight if he can find an opportunity. The papers announce a second fleet of

fifteen sail of the line ready to rendezvous at Portsmouth, to be under the command of Admiral Hood. Their destination unknown.

It is also mentioned that the Dutch fleet had returned to the Texel, the Duke of Leeds having previously made a journey for an interview with the Dutch admiral. This very mysterious circumstance is wholly unexplained.

A certain gentleman who called on me to-day, informed me that a packet had sailed the 16th of August for Quebec, in which went passenger General Clarke. He added that the rumor in England was, that Sir Guy Carleton was to return in her. He made no other communication.

The inclosed letter came to hand to-day. I have had no opportunity of making any inquiry concerning the person recommended in it. If I can obtain any additional lights, they shall be made known without delay.

The object suggested in your letter as preparatory to the meeting of the Legislature shall engage my particular attention.

The papers of the Department of State and the Treasury, and of the commissioners for settling accounts, are on their way to Philadelphia. On the 20th, I propose with my family to set out for the same place.

TO JOHN JAY

PHILADELPHIA, November 13, 1790.

MY DEAR SIR:

I enclose you copies of two resolutions which have passed the House of Representatives of Vir-

ginia. Others had been proposed and disagreed to. But the war was still going on. A spirited remonstrance to Congress is talked of. This is the first symptom of a spirit which must either be killed, or it will kill the Constitution of the United States. I send the resolutions to you, that it may be considered what ought to be done. Ought not the collective weight of the different parts of the government to be employed in exploding the principles they contain? This question arises out of sudden and undigested thought.[1]

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, December 2, 1790.

SIR:

The day before yesterday I received a letter from Mr. Woodbury Langdon, declining the appointment offered him. There was a letter with it for you which I immediately forwarded.

Since that time I have conversed with Mr. Langdon, and have heard from Mr. Gilman; the former is warm in his recommendation of Mr. Keith Spence; he states that his insolvency was owing to the loss of a valuable ship and cargo, and was attended with the most honorable circumstances; that an immediate adjustment with the creditors took place to their entire satisfaction; that the deficiency was only £1,000, which he considers as remitted; that Mr. Spence was in partnership with Mr. Sherburne; that they have both been since in good business, and are

[1] Reprinted from *Life of Jay*, ii., 202.

now more than able to pay whatever they may owe; that the failure happened some years ago; that Mr. Spence, though a native of Scotland, came early to this country—is a man of education and abilities, well known and respected—a firm friend to the Revolution and to the National Government—married to a lady of New Hampshire, with whom he has several children. He showed me a letter from Mr. Spence, which gives a favorable impression of his modesty and capacity.

Mr. Gilman talks of Mr. Spence as a man not generally known, and who, being by birth a foreigner, is not as acceptable as a native to the people of that country; that his attachment to the American cause was rather ambiguous; that he married the daughter of a person who is now in office in the Island of Bermuda, and lately made a visit there; that his insolvency would throw a shade on his appointment in the public opinion.

He, on the other hand, warmly recommended a Mr. William Gardiner, the present Treasurer of New Hampshire; speaks decidedly of his good character, and abilities as a man of business, and of his general good standing in the State.

Mr. Langdon admits Mr. Gardiner to be a good and a qualified man—says he was formerly his first clerk, but affirms that Mr. Spence has greatly the superiority in point of qualification—hints at an arrangement between Mr. Gardiner and Mr. Gilman, the late Loan Officer, by which Mr. Gilman expects to succeed to the office of Treasurer, if the other obtains that of Commissioner of Loans.

Thus stands my information as far as it goes; I conjecture, on the whole, that Mr. Spence is an unexceptionable man, in every respect but that of his late insolvency, and that he is probably *better* qualified than Mr. Gardiner, or, in other words, a man of more ability. That, nevertheless, Mr. Gardiner is qualified for the office, and in other respects an eligible person. Perhaps the appointment of him will be, upon the whole, a safer one—freer from hazard of imputation of any kind.

You are, I presume, not unapprised of a Langdon and Gilman party in New Hampshire. Though it is desirable this business should be finished, yet if it be supposed likely that the arrival of the Eastern members will afford any new light, a few days' delay cannot be very important.

TO WILLIAM SETON [1]

PHILADELPHIA, January 18, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR:

I have learnt with infinite pain the circumstances of a new bank having started up in your city. Its effects cannot but be in every way pernicious. These extravagant sallies of speculation do injury to the government and to the whole system of public credit, by disgusting all sober citizens and giving a wild air to every thing. 'T is impossible but that three great banks in one city must raise such a mass

[1] William Seton, a Scotchman by birth, and a well-known business man of New York. He was Cashier of the Bank of New York, of which Hamilton was one of the founders. See *History of the Bank of New York*, by Henry W. Domett.

of artificial credit as must endanger every one of them, and do harm in every view.

I sincerely hope that the Bank of New York will listen to no coalition with this newly engendered monster; a better alliance, I am strongly persuaded, will be brought about for it, and the joint force of two solid institutions will, without effort or violence, remove the excrescence which has just appeared, and which I consider as a dangerous tumor in your political and commercial economy.

I express myself in these *strong terms* to you confidentially, not that I have any objection to my opinion being known as to the nature and tendency of the thing.

TO ———

PHILADELPHIA, April 10, 1791.

SIR:

Your letter of the 15th of March duly came to hand, though not till after the arrangement for the execution of the act mentioned in your letter had been made.

I wish you not to consider it as a mere compliment, when I say that the light in which your character stands could not fail to have brought you into view in that arrangement, and could you be minutely acquainted with every circumstance that in the President's mind inclined the balance a different way, you would find no reason to be dissatisfied with the estimation in which you have been held. You are well aware that in a comparison of the

pretensions of men of merit, collateral considerations may be often justly allowed to turn the scale.

Suffer me to add that in the course of those future opportunities which may be expected to occur, it would give me a pleasure, as far as may be in my power, to be instrumental in furnishing you with a proper occasion for the exercise of your talents and zeal in the service of the national government.

TO WASHINGTON [1]

April 10, 1791.

* * * It is to be lamented that our system is such as still to leave the public peace of the Union at the mercy of each State government. This is not only the case as it regards direct interferences, but as it regards the inability of the national government, in many particulars, to take those direct measures for carrying into execution its views and engagements which exigencies require. For example: a party comes from a county of Virginia into Pennsylvania and wantonly murders some friendly Indians. The national government, instead of having power to apprehend murderers and bring them to justice, is obliged to make a representation to that of Pennsylvania; that of Pennsylvania again is to make a representation to that of Virginia. And whether the murderers shall be brought to justice at all, must depend upon the particular policy and energy and good disposition of two State governments and the efficacy of the provisions of their re-

[1] The other parts of this letter are not to be found.

spective laws; and the security of other States, and the money of all, are at the discretion of one. These things require a remedy.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, April 17, 1791.

You will probably recollect that previous to your departure from this place, anticipating the event which has taken place with regard to the death of Mr. Everleigh, I took the liberty to mention to you that Mr. Wolcott, the present Auditor, would be in every respect worthy of your consideration as his successor in office.

Now that the event has happened, a concern as anxious as it was natural for the success of the department, united with a sentiment of justice towards Mr. Wolcott, leads me to a repetition of that idea. This gentleman's conduct in the station he now fills has been that of an excellent officer. It has not only been good, but distinguished. It has combined all the requisites which can be desired: moderation with firmness, liberality with exactness, indefatigable industry with an accurate and sound discernment, a thorough knowledge of business, and a remarkable spirit of order and arrangement. Indeed, I ought to say that I owe very much of whatever success may have attended the merely executive operations of the department to Mr. Wolcott; and I do not fear to commit myself when I add that he possesses in an eminent degree all the qualifications

desirable in a Comptroller of the Treasury—that it is scarcely possible to find a man in the United States more competent to the duties of that station than himself; few who could be equally so. It may be truly said of him that he is a man of rare merit, and I have good evidence that he has been viewed in this light by the members of Congress extensively from different quarters of the Union, and is so considered by all that part of the public who have had opportunities of witnessing his conduct.

The immediate relation, too, which his present situation bears to that of Comptroller is a strong argument in his favor. Though a regular gradation of office is not admissible in a strict sense in regard to offices of a civil nature, and is wholly inapplicable to those of the first rank (such as the heads of the great executive departments), yet a certain regard to the relation which one situation bears to another is consonant with the natural ideas of justice, and is recommended by powerful considerations of policy. The expectation of promotion in civil as in military life is a great stimulus to virtuous exertion, while examples of unrewarded exertion, supported by talent and qualification, are proportionable discouragements. Where they do not produce resignations they leave men dissatisfied, and a dissatisfied man seldom does his duty well.

In a government like ours, where pecuniary compensations are moderate, the principle of gradual advancement as a reward for good conduct is perhaps more necessary to be attended to than in others where offices are more lucrative. By due attention

to it it will operate as a means to secure respectable men for offices of inferior emolument and consequence.

In addition to the rest, Mr. Wolcott's experience in this particular line pleads powerfully in his favor. This experience may be dated back to his office of Comptroller of the State of Connecticut, and has been perfected by practice in his present place.

A question may perhaps, sir, arise in your mind, whether some inconvenience may not attend his removal from his present office. I am of opinion that no sensible inconvenience will be felt on this score, since it will be easy for him as Comptroller, who is the immediate superior of the Auditor, to form any man of business for the office he will leave, in a short period of time. More inconvenience would be felt by the introduction of a Comptroller not in the immediate train of the business.

Besides this, it may be observed that a degree of inconvenience on this score cannot be deemed an obstacle, but upon the principle which would bar the progress of merit from one station to another.

On this point of inconvenience a reflection occurs, which I think I ought not to suppress. Mr. Wolcott is a man of sensibility, not unconscious of his own value, and he doubtless must believe that he has pretensions from situation to the office. Should another be appointed, and he resign, the derangement of the department would truly be distressing to the public service.

In suggesting thus particularly the reasons which in my mind operate in favor of Mr. Wolcott, I am

influenced by information that other characters will be brought to your view by weighty advocates, and as I think it more than possible that Mr. Wolcott may not be mentioned to you by any other person than myself, I feel it a duty arising out of my situation in the department, to bear my full and explicit testimony to his worth, confident that he will justify by every kind of *substantial* merit any mark of your approbation which he may receive.

I trust, sir, that in thus freely disclosing my sentiments to you, you will be persuaded that I only yield to the suggestions of an honest zeal for the public good, and of a firm conviction that the prosperity of the department under my particular care (one so interesting to the aggregate movements of the government) will be best promoted by transferring the present Auditor to the office of Comptroller of the Treasury.

TO WASHINGTON

SIR: PHILADELPHIA, June 19, 1791.

I have been duly honored with your letter of the 13th inst., from Mount Vernon; and, according to your desire have informed Mr. Wolcott of your intention to appoint him Comptroller. This appointment gives me particular pleasure, as I am confident it will be a *great* and *real* improvement in the state of the Treasury Department. There can no material inconvenience attend the postponing a decision concerning the future Auditor till your arrival in this city.

I am very happy to learn that the circumstances of your journey have been in all respects so favorable. It has certainly been a particularly fortunate one, and I doubt not it will have been of real utility.

There is nothing which can be said to be new here worth communicating, except generally that all my accounts from *Europe*, both private and official, concur in proving that the impressions now entertained of our government and its affairs (I may say) *throughout* that quarter of the globe, are of a nature the most flattering and pleasing.

TO BENJAMIN GOODHUE [1]

PHILADELPHIA, June 30, 1791.

MY DEAR SIR:

As Mr. Cone, who, I think, informed me he had a letter from you on the same subject, undertook to say all that could be said in relation to Mr. Gray's affair, I permitted the hurry of business to keep me silent. Nothing further concerning the affair has since come to me, so that I am wholly ignorant what turn it may have taken. It must have given you pleasure to learn how much the Constitution of the United States, and the measures under it, in which you have had so considerable an agency, have contributed to raise this country in the estimation of Europe. According to the accounts received here, the change which has been wrought in the opinion of that part of the world respecting the United

[1] Benjamin Goodhue, of Salem, Member of Congress from Massachusetts.

States is almost wonderful. The British Cabinet wish to be thought disposed to enter into amicable and liberal arrangements with us. They had appointed Mr. Elliott, who, on private considerations, had declined; and it is affirmed from pretty good, though not decisive authority, that they have substituted a Mr. Hammond, and that his arrival may shortly be expected. I would not warrant the issue, but if some liberal arrangement with Great Britain should ensue, it will have a prodigious effect upon the conduct of some other parts of Europe. It is, however, most wise for us to depend as little as possible upon European caprice, and to exert ourselves to the utmost to unfold and improve every domestic resource.

In all appearance, the subscriptions to the Bank of the United States will proceed with astonishing rapidity. It will not be surprising if a week completes them.

TO MRS. MARTHA WALKER

MADAM: PHILADELPHIA, July 2, 1791.

Mr. Ames [1] has conveyed to me your letter of the 9th of May.

Hitherto it has not been in my power to consider the merits of your application to Congress, but you may be assured of its being done so as to admit of a report at the commencement of the ensuing session.

[1] Fisher Ames, Member of Congress from Massachusetts, and well known for his ability and eloquence. I can find nothing in the State papers or in the Annals of Congress to explain Mrs. Walker or her claim.

While I dare not encourage any expectation, and while my conduct must be determined by my sense of official propriety and duty, I may with great truth say that I shall enter into the examination with every prepossession which can be inspired by favorable impression of personal merit, and by a sympathetic participation in the distresses of a lady as deserving as unfortunate.

TO RUFUS KING

My Dear Sir: July 8, 1791.

I received your letter on a certain subject, and was obliged by it. But there was nothing practicable by way of remedy.

The thing, as it has turned out, though good in the main, has certainly some ill sides. There have also been faults in the detail, which are not favorable to complete satisfaction. But what shall we do? 'T is the lot of every thing human to mingle a portion of evil with the good.

The President, as you will have seen, has returned. His journey has done good, as it regards his own impressions. He is persuaded that the dispositions of the Southern people are good, and that certain pictures which have been drawn have been strongly colored by the imagination of the drawers.

We have just heard from the Westward, but of no *event* of importance. Things are said to have been in good preparation; the people of Kentucky wonderfully pleased with the government; and *Scot*,

with a corps of ardent volunteers, on their route to demolish every savage, man, woman, and child.

On Tuesday next I expect to leave this for New York, with Mrs. Hamilton.

TO RUFUS KING

August 7, 1791.

Your letter of Monday evening has a good deal tranquillized me. I am glad to learn that the mischiefs from the over-use of scrip are not likely to be very extensive.

I observe what you say respecting the quotation of my opinion. I was not unaware of the delicacy of giving any, and was sufficiently reserved until I perceived the extreme to which bank scrip, and with it other stock, was tending. But when I saw this I thought it advisable to speak out—for a bubble connected with any operation is, of all the enemies I have to fear, in my judgment the most formidable; and not only not to promote, but, as far as depends on me, to counteract, delusions, appears to me to be the only secure foundation on which to stand. I thought it expedient, therefore, to risk some thing in contributing to dissolve the charm. But I find that I have been misquoted. Speaking of sales on time at seventy-four shillings for 6 per cent., etc., I think it probable I may have intimated an opinion that they went faster than could be supported. But it is untrue that I have given as a standard prices below those of the market, as mentioned by you. On the contrary, my standard, on

pretty mature reflection, has been and is nearly as follows:

For bank scrip	195
6 per cents	22
3 per cents	12
Deferred	12 8

I proceed on the idea of 5 per cent. interest—taking at the same time into calculation the *partial irredeemability* of the 6 per cents.

I give you my standard, that you may be able if necessary to contradict insinuations of an estimation on my part short of that standard—for the purpose of depressing the funds.

TO TIMOTHY PICKERING

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 13, 1791.

DEAR SIR:

Some investigations in which I am engaged induce a wish to be able to form as accurate an idea as can be obtained of the usual product in proportion to the value of cultivated lands in different parts of the United States.

As I am persuaded no person can better assist me in this object than yourself, I take the liberty to ask the favor of your assistance.

It has occurred to me that if the *actual* product on cultivated farms of *middling* quality could be ascertained with tolerable precision, it might afford as good a rule by which to judge as the nature of the thing admits of.

With this view I have prepared a form with a number of columns under heads specifying the different kinds of produce usual in your quarter, in order that they may be filled in each case according to the fact and as the nature of each head shall require.

There are besides some additional columns which respect the total value of the farm and the different kinds of land of which it consists.

The value of the farm must be determined not by what it would fetch in cash on a forced or sudden sale, but by what it would sell for at a reasonable and usual credit, or perhaps by what the opinion of the neighborhood would compute to be its true value.

The quantity of each kind of land must conform to the actual quantity in cultivation at the time for which the product is taken.

It is submitted to your judgment, according to circumstances, whether to determine the product by the average of a series of years, three or more, or by what has been considered as a year of middling fertility.

The price ought to express the value of each article on the farm. Perhaps to determine this there is no better rule than to deduct the expense of transportation, from the price at the nearest usual market. The high price of an extraordinary year would not be a proper criterion; but that which is deemed by intelligent and reasonable farmers a good saving price.

If not inconvenient to you to execute my present request, you will add to the favor by explaining in each case the rule by which you have proceeded;

and if it would not be attended with too much trouble, the extension of the inquiry to two or three different farms would be satisfactory.

In a matter with which I am not very familiar, it is possible I may have omitted circumstances of importance to the object of my inquiry. The supplying of such omissions will be particularly acceptable.

As whatever comes from the Treasury is apt to be suspected of having reference to some scheme of taxation, it is my wish that the knowledge of this request may be confined to yourself. And I think it not amiss to add that *in truth* it has not the most remote reference to any such purpose.[1]

[1] Now first printed from the Pickering papers in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

The form inclosed is as follows:

Kinds of Land	.....	Value of Farm.....
	.....	Acres of Arable Land.....
	.....	Acres of Pasture Land.....
	.....	Acres of Meadow.....
	.....	Acres of Woodland.....
Annual Product	.....	Bushels of Wheat.....
	.....	Bushels of Rye.....
	.....	Bushels of Corn.....
	.....	Bushels of Oats.....
	.....	Bushels of Barley.....
	.....	Bushels of Buckwheat.....
	.....	Bushels of Potatoes.. .....
	.....	Other Roots and Vegetables in Value .....
	.....	Black Cattle.....
	.....	Horses.....
	.....	Sheep.....
	.....	Hogs. .....
	.....	Dozens of Poultry.....
	.....	Pounds of Tobacco.....
	.....	Cords of Wood Consumed in Fuel..
	.....	Hay.....

Quantity Consumed by Cattle and Poultry. **Prices.**

TO WILLIAM SETON

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Aug. 15, 1791.

Inclosed is a resolution of the Trustees of the Sinking Fund, appropriating a certain sum for the purchase of public debt, within certain limits therein specified; in consequence of that resolution I have concluded to apply one hundred and fifty thousand dollars towards purchases in the city of New York, and to ask you to undertake the execution of the business. In thus forbearing to employ some officer of the United States, and having recourse to your aid, I am governed by the consideration that your situation would lead to such an execution of the business as might at the same time best consist with the accommodation of the Bank of New York.

Inclosed is a letter to the directors of the bank, requesting them to pay to you the above-mentioned sum. You will, of course, however, only avail yourself of this authority in proportion to the actual purchases you shall make, as you will please to advise me weekly of such as you may be able to effect. The Trustees have never yet determined on any allowance to the persons who have been employed in similar purchases, nor is it clear how much is in their power on this point. I can therefore only say that the same rule will govern in your case as in that of others.[1]

[1] Now first printed, with the inclosures which follow, from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

(Inclosure.)

Whereupon it is *Resolved:*

1. That the aforesaid sum to purchase, at the following rates: To the purchase of funded stock, bearing a present interest of six per

TO WILLIAM SETON

(Private.)

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 16, 1791.

I send you herewith an official letter; this private one I write as explanatory of it. I hardly expect that you will be able to procure the debt within the limits prescribed, and yet I do not know what effect the imprudent speculations in bank scrip may produce. A principal object with me is to keep the stock from falling too low in case the embarrassments of the dealers should lead to sacrifices; whence you will infer that it is not my wish that the

centum, at twenty shillings in the pound; funded debt, bearing an interest of three per centum, at twelve shillings in the pound; and deferred debt, at twelve shillings and six-pence in the pound.

2. That if any of the aforesaid species of debt be lower than the rates here fixed, preference be given to it.

3. That any surplus of the said purchase money or the whole, as the case, under the preceding circumstances may be, be applied in the first instance to the purchases of the three per cents and the deferred debt, as far as they can be obtained, and afterwards to the purchase of funded stock of six per cent.

4. That the cities of Philadelphia and New York be the places of purchases.

In behalf of the Board,
(Signed) TH. JEFFERSON.

(Inclosure.)

To the President, Directors, and Co. of the Bank of New York:

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Aug. 16, 1791.

GENTLEMEN:

You will please cause to be paid to William Seton, Esq., such sums, not exceeding in the whole one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, as he may require, to be applied by him towards purchases of the public debt, at the request of the Trustees of the Sinking Fund; the advances you shall make, when known, will be covered in the requisite forms.

Yours, etc.,
(Signed) A. HAMILTON.

purchases should be below the prescribed limits, yet if such should unfortunately be the state of the market, it must of course govern. The limits assigned for the purchases of 3-per-cents and deferred debt are founded on a calculation of the government rate of interest being 5 per cent. The same rule has not been extended to the stock bearing an immediate interest of 6 per cent., because the government have a right to redeem it at par in certain proportions; and though to individual purchasers it is worth more than par, because a part only can be redeemed, yet it is not at present the interest of the government to give more than par for it, because of the right to redeem a part. Indeed, the law limits the commissioners in this particular. You will recollect that the act requires that the purchases should be made openly. This has been construed to mean by a known agent for the public. When you make a purchase, therefore, it will be proper that it should be understood that it is on account of the United States, but this need not precede the purchase; and it will be best that there should be no unnecessary demonstration, lest it should raise hopes beyond what will be realized.

P. S.—If the prices of stocks should exceed the prescribed limits, you may retain the letter to the directors. If there are any gentlemen who support the *funds* and others who *depress* them, I shall be pleased that your purchases may aid the *former*,—this in great confidence.

TO WILLIAM DUER

PHILADELPHIA, Aug. 17, 1791.

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I have received your two letters of the 12th and 10th.

The subscription-book for the Manufacturing Society did not remain with me nor with either of the two gentlemen who came on with me. Is it with neither of those who accompanied you? If it is not, it must have been left at Brunswick, and you will do well to write to some trusty person there to look it up and send it to you. I am impatient for the alterations which were agreed upon, and a list of the subscribers.

La Roche may go to Scioto, if he can be back in the time you mention.

I fear that in the hurry of writing my letter on the subject of bank scrip, I must have expressed myself more strongly than was intended.

The conversation here was: "Bank scrip is getting so high as to become a bubble," in one breath; in another: "'T is a South-Sea dream"; in a third: "There is a combination of knowing ones at New York to raise it as high as possible by fictitious purchases, in order to take in the credulous and ignorant"; in another: "Duer, Constable, and some others are mounting the balloon as fast as possible. If it don't soon burst, thousands will rue it," etc., etc.

As to myself, my friend, I think I know you too well to suppose you capable of such views as were implied in those innuendoes, or to harbor the most

distant thought that you could wander from the path either of public good or private integrity. But I will honestly own I had serious fears for you—for your *purse* and for your *reputation;* and with an anxiety for both, I wrote to you in earnest terms. You are sanguine, my friend. You ought to be aware of it yourself and to be on your guard against the propensity. I feared lest it might carry you further than was consistent either with your own safety or the public good. My friendship for you and my concern for the public cause were both alarmed. If the infatuation had continued progressive, and any extensive mischiefs had ensued, you would certainly have had a large portion of the blame. Conscious of this I wrote to you in all the earnestness of apprehensive friendship.

I do not widely differ from you about the real value of bank scrip. I should rather call it about 190, to be within bounds, with hopes of better things, and I sincerely wish you may be able to support it at what you mention. The acquisition of too much of it by foreigners will certainly be an evil.

TO WILLIAM SETON

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Aug. 22, 1791.

I have to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 18th. The transfer of the stock which you have purchased on account of the United States must be made to *the Vice-President, the Chief-Justice, the*

Secretary of the Treasury, the Secretary of State, and the Attorney-General for the time being.

In all future purchases, it will be most convenient to have the stock in the first instance transferred as here directed.[1]

TO WILLIAM SETON

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Sept. 7, 1791.

I write herewith to the directors of the Bank of New York to advance you a further sum of fifty thousand dollars towards purchases of the public debt on account of the United States, on the same principles with the sum heretofore advanced to you for the like purpose.[1]

TO THE PRESIDENT, DIRECTORS, ETC., OF THE BANK OF NEW YORK

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, Sept. 7, 1791.

GENTLEMEN:

I request you to furnish the cashier of your bank with the further sum of fifty thousand dollars, to be by him applied towards purchases of the public debts on account of the United States.

P. S.—A warrant will issue to-morrow to cover the 150,000 dollars already advanced for the same purpose.[1]

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO WILLIAM SETON

(Private.)

September 7, 1791.

You will find by the letter herewith that you are furnished with a further sum of 50,000 dollars for purchases. I wish I could have gone farther, but my hands are tied by the want of a majority of the Trustees being present, Mr. Jefferson being just gone to Virginia. The $50,000 now authorized, and the sum appropriated here for the same purpose, complete what has as yet been determined to be applied.

You may, however, make it known that the treasurer is purchasing here, etc.[1]

TO WILLIAM SETON

(Private.)

September 8, 1791.

I wrote you a private letter last evening, which went by a private opportunity. The principal object was to inform you that I could not exceed the sum now directed to be advanced for want of authority, the present $50,000 completing the sum heretofore appropriated by the Trustees, and there not being here a sufficient number for a Board; that purchases by the Treasurer were going on here——[1]

[1] Now first printed from the Hamilton papers in the State Department.

TO A FRIEND

September 30, 1791.

DEAR SIR:

If you can conveniently let me have twenty dollars for a few days, be so good as to send it by bearer. I have just put myself out of cash by payment of Major L'Enfant's bill.[1]

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 11, 1791.

SIR:

Lord Wycomb having mentioned to me his intentions to pay you his respects at Mount Vernon, I beg your permission to present him to you.

The personal acquirements and permits of his lordship conspire, with a consideration for the friendly dispositions and liberal policy of his father, the Marquis of Lansdowne, towards this country, to constitute a claim in his favor to cordial notice.

TO GENERAL KNOX

October 17, 1791.

DEAR SIR:

The following are the particulars in the President's letter which he expects you to prepare.

[1] Reprinted from *Reminiscences of J. A. Hamilton*, p. 7. The letter is a curious one, because it shows how really pressed Hamilton was for even small sums of money. On the back of the letter is the following: Memorandum by the lender:—"Gave a check for fifty dollars, dated Sept. 30, 1791."

Expeditions against the Indians. Every pacific measure was previously tried to produce accord and avoid expense.

More pointed laws, with penalties to restrain our own people; and this and good faith may produce tranquillity.

Treaties with Cherokees and Six Nations, and reasons.

I annex to the first the hints in the President's letter.

You will, of course, send any other things that occur on *any point.*[1]

TO WILLIAM SETON

November 25, 1791.

My Dear Sir:

I seize the first moment of leisure to answer your letter of the 21st inst. Strange as it may appear to you, it is not more strange than true that the whole affair of branches was *begun*, *continued*, and *ended*, not only without my participation, but *against my judgment.*

When I say against my judgment, you will not understand that my opinion was given and overruled, for I never was consulted; but that the steps taken were contrary to my private opinion of the course which ought to have been pursued.

I am sensible of the inconveniences to be apprehended, and I regret them, but I do not know that it will be in my power to avert them.

[1] Now first printed from the Knox papers in the possession of the New England Historic Genealogical Society.

Ultimately it will be incumbent on me to place the public funds in the keeping of the branch; but it *may be depended upon* that I shall *precipitate nothing*, but shall so conduct the transfer as not to embarrass or distress your institution. I have not time to say more at present, except that if there are *finally* to be two institutions, my regard for you makes me wish you may feel yourself at liberty to take your fortune with the branch which must preponderate.

TO PHILIP HAMILTON [1]

PHILADELPHIA, Dec. 5, 1791.

I received with great pleasure, my dear Philip, the letter which you wrote me last week. Your mamma and myself were very happy to learn that you are pleased with your situation, and content to stay as long as shall be thought best for you. We hope and believe that nothing will happen to alter this disposition. Your master also informs me that you recited a lesson the first day you began, very much to his satisfaction. I expect every letter from him will give me a fresh proof of your progress, for I know you can do a great deal if you please, and I am sure you have too much spirit not to exert yourself that you may make us every day more and more proud of you. You remember that I engaged to send for you next Saturday, and I will do it, unless you request me to put it off, for a promise must never be broken, and I never will make you one which I will

[1] His eldest son.

not fill as far as I am able; but it has occurred to me that the Christmas holidays are near at hand, and I suppose your school will then break up for a few days and give you an opportunity of coming to stay with us for a longer time than if you should come on Saturday. Will it not be best, therefore, to put off your journey till the holidays? But determine as you like best, and let me know what will be most pleasing to you. A good night to my darling son.[1]

TO NICHOLAS GOUVERNEUR [2]

1792.

Mr. B. last evening delivered me your letter, enclosing a copy of your correspondence with Mr. Lewis. In one other respect I feel myself painfully situated, having received a favorable impression of your character. I am sorry to observe any thing to have come from you which I am obliged to consider as exceptionable. Your second letter to Mr. Lewis contains a general, and of course an unjustifiable reflection on the profession to which I belong, and of a nature to put it out of my power to render you any service in the line of that profession. I really believe that you did not attend to the full force of the expression when you tell Mr. Lewis, "Attorneys like to make the most of their bills of cost"; but it contains in it other insinuations which cannot be pleasing to any man in the profession, and which must oblige any one that has the proper delicacy to de-

[1] Reprinted from the *Reminiscences of J. A. Hamilton*, p. 4.

[2] A merchant of New York.

cline the business of a person who professedly entertains such an idea of the conduct of this profession. I make allowance for your feelings when you wrote that letter, and am therefore reluctantly drawn into these observations.[1]

TO GULIAN VERPLANCK AND OTHERS

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 15, 1792.

GENTLEMEN:

The mark of esteem on the part of fellow-citizens, to whom I am attached by so many ties, which is announced in your letter of 29th of December, is entitled to my affectionate acknowledgments.

I shall cheerfully obey their wish as far as respects the taking of my portrait, but I ask that they will permit it to appear unconnected with any incident of my political life. The simple representation of their fellow-citizen and friend will best accord with my feelings.

TO WILLIAM SETON

PHILADELPHIA, Jan. 24, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR:

I feel great satisfaction in knowing from yourself that your institution rejects the idea of a coalition with the new project, or rather hydra of projects.

I shall labor to give what has taken place a turn favorable to another union, the propriety of which is, as you say, clearly illustrated by the present state of

[1] Reprinted from *Reminiscences of J. A. Hamilton*, p. 6.

things. It is my wish that the Bank of New York may, by all means, continue to receive deposits from the Collector in the paper of the Bank of the United States, and that they may also receive payment for the Dutch bills in the same paper. This paper may either be remitted to the Treasurer, or remain in the bank, as itself shall deem most expedient. I have explicitly directed the Treasurer to forbear drawing on the Bank of New York without special direction from me. And my intention is to leave you in possession of all the money you have or may receive till I am assured that the present storm is effectually weathered.

Everybody here sees the propriety of your having refused the paper of the Bank of the United States in such a crisis of your affairs. Be confidential with me; if you are pressed, whatever support may be in my power shall be afforded. I consider the public interest as materially involved in aiding a valuable institution like yours to withstand the attacks of a confederated host of frantic and, I fear, in too many instances, unprincipled gamblers.

Adieu. Heaven take care of good men and good views!

TO WILLIAM DUER [1]

My Dear Duer: Philadelphia, March 14, 1792.

Your letter of the 11th got to hand this day. I am affected beyond measure at its contents, especially as it was too late to have any influence upon the

[1] Duer had speculated deeply and failed disastrously.

event you were apprehensive of, Mr. Wolcott's instructions having gone off yesterday.

I trust, however, the alternative which they present to the attorney of the , and the discretion he will use in managing the affair, will enable you to avoid any pernicious *éclat*, if your affairs are otherwise retrievable.

Be this as it may, act with *fortitude* and *honor*. If you cannot reasonably hope for a favorable extrication, do not plunge deeper. Have the courage to make a full stop. Take all the care you can in the first place of institutions of public utility, and in the next of all fair creditors.

God bless you, and take care of you and your family. I have experienced all the bitterness of soul on your account which a warm attachment can inspire. I will not now pain you with any wise remarks, though if you recover the present stroke, I shall take great liberties with you. Assure yourself, in good and bad fortune, of my sincere friendship and affection.

TO WILLIAM SETON

(Private)

PHILADELPHIA, March 25, 1792.

If six per cents. should sink below par, you may purchase on account of the United States at par to the extent of fifty thousand dollars. You will not, however, declare on whose account you act, because, though there is, as to a purchase on that principle,

no difference of opinion among the trustees, the thing is not formally arranged, and this is Sunday.

It will be very probably conjectured that you appear for the public, and the conjecture may be left to have its course, but without confession. The purchase ought, in the present state of things, to be at auction, and not till to-morrow evening. But if the purchase at auction will not tend as well to the purpose of relief as a different mode, it may be departed from; the usual note must be made of persons, time, etc. You will consider whether done all at once, or a part now and a part then, will best answer the purpose; in the state of this market the latter mode is found preferable. I have just received a letter from Mr. Short, our minister resident, dated Amsterdam, 28th December, by which he informs me that he has effected a loan for three millions of florins at four per cent. interest, on account of the United States. This may be announced; and as, in the present moment of suspicion, some minds may be disposed to consider the thing as a mere expedient to support the stocks, I pledge my honor for its exact truth. Why then so much despondency among the holders of our stock? When foreigners lend the United States at four per cent., will they not purchase here upon a similar scale, making reasonable allowance for expense of agency, etc.? Why then do individuals part with so good a property so much below its value? Does Duer's failure affect the solidity of the government?

After paying the present quarter's interest I shall have near a million dollars in cash, and a million

more in bonds from the duties of last year. All this is truly so much beforehand. The duties for the current year being fully adequate to the objects of the year, except the further sum of about five hundred thousand dollars for the western expedition, for which the ways and means have been proposed. Is the treasury of Great Britain comparatively in so good a state? Is the nation comparatively so equal to its debt? Why then so much depression? I shall be answered, The immediate necessity for money. But if the banks are forbearing as to the necessity of paying up, cannot the parties give each other *mutual credit* and avoid so great a press? If there are a few *harpies* who will not concur in this forbearance, let such be paid and execrated, and let others forbear. The necessity of great sacrifices among your dealers cannot affect the nation, but it may deeply wound the city of New York by a transfer to foreigners and citizens of other States of a large mass of property greatly below its value. The face of your affairs may undergo for a considerable time a serious change. Would not the plan I suggested to you in my last be a means of securing more effectually the debts due to the bank by accepting in part payment *the credits* on your books?

While I encourage due exertion in the banks, I observe that I hope they will put nothing to risk. No calamity truly *public* can happen while these institutions remain sound. They must, therefore, not yield too far to the impulse of circumstances.

TO WILLIAM SETON

(Private)

PHILADELPHIA, April 4, 1792.

The post of to-day brought me a letter from you. I am pained beyond expression at the picture you and others give me of the situation of my fellow-citizens, especially as an ignorance of the extent of the disorder renders it impossible to judge whether any adequate remedy can be applied.

You may apply another 50,000 dollars to purchases at such a time as you judge it can be rendered most useful. The prices may be 20*s.* for 6 per cents., 12*s.* for 3 per cents., and 12*s.* 6*d.* for deferred. The law and the object require that it should be known you purchase for the public. I shall by the next post send an official authorization.

I have doubt, however, whether it will be best to apply this immediately or wait the happening of the crisis, which I fear is inevitable. If, as is represented, a pretty extensive explosion is to take place, the depression of the funds at such a moment will be in the extreme, and then it may be more important than now to enter the market in force. I can in such a a case without difficulty add a hundred thousand dollars—probably a larger sum. But you, who are on the spot, being best able to calculate consequences, I leave the proper moment of operating to your judgment. To relieve the distressed and support the funds are primary objects. As it may possibly become advisable for the bank to receive *payments* in stock from embarrassed persons, it may not be amiss that you should know as a guide that there are at

this moment orders from a respectable Dutch concern to purchase 6 per cents. at 24*s*. if bills can be sold at par; of this I have the most *unequivocal* evidence. This is a proof that foreigners will be willing to give that price. How vexatious that imprudent speculations of individuals should lead to an alienation of the national property at such under-rates as are now given! I presume your greatest embarrassments arise from the contracts to pay and deliver not yet at issue. Is it possible to form any conjecture of their extent?

TO WILLIAM SETON

(Private.)

PHILADELPHIA, April 12, 1792.

I have your letters of the 10th and 11th, and, more to my distress and surprise, I learn by other letters a confirmation of what you apprehended, namely, Mr. Macomb's failure. This misfortune has, I fear, a long tail to it.

The enclosed, you will perceive, gives you additional latitude. The terms as heretofore for 6 per cents., 20*s*.; 3 per cents. 12*s*.; and deferred 12*s*. 6*d*.

You must judge of the best mode and manner of applying the sum. The operation here not being extensive, I have found it best to eke out my aid. I doubt whether this will answer with you. My reason was to keep up men's spirits by appearing often, though not much at one time. All is left to you. You will doubtless be cautious in securing your transfer before you pay.

TO THE DIRECTORS AND COMPANY OF THE BANK OF NEW YORK

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, April 12, 1792.

GENTLEMEN:

Since my official letter to you authorizing an advance to your cashier of fifty thousand dollars, to be applied to the purchase of public debt on account of the United States, I have authorized that gentleman to apply for another fifty thousand dollars, and to make the like use of it. I now confirm this direction, and add my desire that he may be furnished with a further sum of fifty thousand dollars, making in the whole one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, the whole for the purpose above mentioned.

TO WILLIAM DUER

April 22, 1792.

MY DEAR DUER:

I hoped ere this to have seen you, to have afforded you whatever of aid could have resulted from my advice, after knowing your real situation. But the session protracts itself, and I can scarcely say when it will finish. Lest the information contained in my last should induce you to postpone an arrangement with your creditors in the hope of speedily having an opportunity of consulting me, I have thought it best to apprise you of the degree of delay which may attend my proposed visit to New York. Indeed, I can hardly flatter myself that my advice could be of any real importance to you.

How are you? How are your family? At a moment of composure I shall be glad to hear from you.

Eliza joins me in affectionate remembrances to Lady Kitty.[1] Farewell.

TO WILLIAM SETON

TREASURY DEPARTMENT, May 10, 1792.

SIR:

I received your letter of the 7th inst., covering an account of stock purchased by you for the United States.

I observe that you have exceeded the sum which was limited by me to the amount of one thousand and ninety-eight dollars and eighty-nine cents; but so small a difference is not very material, and I am willing that the whole should remain on account of the United States.

In order to a winding up of the business, I have now to request that you will, as soon as it can be conveniently done, cause all the stock to be transferred in the names of the trustees as heretofore, and that you will then procure from the commissioner and forward to me the necessary certificates for transferring the stock from the books of the commissioner to those of the treasurer.

[1] "Lady Kitty" was Duer's wife. Mrs. Duer who was a beauty and belle in the society of that day (see Griswold's *Republican Court*) was Katherine Alexander, daughter of William Alexander, the unsuccessful claimant to the earldom of Stirling. He was, as is well known, a distinguished officer in our war for independence, and was commonly called "Lord Stirling," from which his youngest daughter came to be known as "Lady Kitty."

You will please to accept of my best acknowledgment for this additional mark of your zeal for the public service, and believe me to be, etc.

TO WILLIAM DUER

May 23, 1792.

My dear Duer, five minutes ago I received your letter of yesterday. I hasten to express to you my thoughts, as your situation does not permit of delay. I am of opinion that those friends who have lent you their money or security from personal confidence in your honor, and without being interested in the operations in which you may have been engaged, ought to be taken care of absolutely, and preferably to all creditors. In the next place, public institutions ought to be secured. On this point the manufacturing society will claim peculiar regard. I am told the funds of that society have been drawn out of both banks; I trust they are not diverted. The public interest and my reputation are deeply concerned in the matter. Your affairs with the government, as connected with your office as assistant to the Board of Treasury, will deserve your particular attention. Persons of whom you have made actual purchases and whose property has been delivered to you, would stand next after public institutions. But here perhaps some arbitration may be made. It would certainly be desirable to distinguish between the price of stock at the time of purchase and its enhanced price upon time. With regard to contracts merely executory, and in regard to which differences would be to be paid, no stock having been delivered,

I postpone claims of this nature to all others. They ought not to interfere with any claim which is founded on value actually given. As to the usurious tribe: these present themselves under different aspects. Are these women, or ignorant people, or trustees of infants? The real principal advanced and legal interest would, in such cases, stand, in my mind, on high ground. The mere veteran usurers may be taken greater liberties with. Their real principal and interest, however, abstracted from usurious accumulation, would stand better than claims constituted wholly by profits from speculative bargains. But the following course deserves consideration: Take care of debts to friends who have aided you by their money or credit disinterestedly, and the public institutions. Assign the rest of your property for the benefit of creditors generally. The law will do the rest. Whenever usury can be proved, the contract, I take it, will be null. Where it cannot be proved, the parties will be obliged to acknowledge on oath, and then their principal and interest only will be due. Wherever a fair account can be stated, and all the sums borrowed and paid can be set against each other, it is probable it will be found that more has been paid than, on a computation of legal interest, was ever received. Here, I presume, the demand would be extinguished, and possibly the parties would be compelled to disgorge. These are rather desultory thoughts than a systematic view of the subject. I wish I had more time to form a more digested opinion, but as I have not you must take what I can give. Adieu, my unfortunate

friend. God bless you and extricate you with reputation. Again adieu. Be honorable, calm, and firm.[1]

TO WILLIAM SETON

PHILADELPHIA, May 25, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR:

The society for the establishing of useful manufactures, at their last meeting resolved to borrow a sum of five thousand dollars upon a pledge of deferred stock. Mr. Walker is empowered to negotiate the loan, and I expect application will be made to the Bank of New York for it. I have a strong wish that the directors of that bank may be disposed to give facilities to this institution upon terms of perfect safety to itself. I will add that from its situation it is much the interest of our city that it should succeed. It is not difficult to discern the advantage of being the immediate market of a considerable manufacturing town. A pledge of public stock will completely fulfil the idea of perfect security. I will add more, that in my opinion banks ought to afford accommodation in such cases upon easy terms of interest. I think five per cent. ought to suffice, for a direct public good is presented. And institutions of this kind, within reasonable limits, ought to consider it as a principal object to promote beneficial public purposes.

To you, my dear sir, I will not scruple to say *in confidence* that the Bank of New York shall suffer no

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, iv., 289.

diminution of its *pecuniary facilities* from any accommodation it may afford to the society in question. I feel my reputation much concerned in its welfare.

I would not wish any formal communication of this letter to the directors, but you may make known my wishes to such of them as you may judge expedient.

TO COLONEL EDWARD CARRINGTON [1]

PHILADELPHIA, May 26, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR:

Believing that I possess a share of your personal friendship and confidence, and yielding to that which I feel towards you; persuaded also, that our political creed is the same on two essential points—first, the necessity of Union to the respectability and happiness of this country, and second, the necessity of an efficient general government to maintain the Union, I have concluded to unbosom myself to you, on the present state of political parties and views. I will ask no reply to what I shall say; I only ask that you will be persuaded the representations I shall make are agreeable to the real and sincere impressions of my mind. You will make the due allowance for the influence of circumstances upon it; you will consult your own observations, and you will draw such a conclusion as shall appear to you proper. When I accepted the office I now hold, it was under full persuasion, that from similarity of thinking, conspiring

[1] Col. Carrington, of Virginia, was an old and trusted friend of Hamilton.

with personal good-will, I should have the firm support of Mr. Madison, in the general course of my administration. Aware of the intrinsic difficulties of the situation, and of the powers of Mr. Madison, I do not believe I should have accepted under a different supposition. I have mentioned the similarity of thinking between that gentleman and myself. This was relative, not merely to the general principles of national policy and government, but to the leading points, which were likely to constitute questions in the administration of the finances. I mean, first, the expediency of funding the debt; second, the inexpediency of discrimination between original and present holders; third, the expediency of assuming the State debts.

As to the first point, the evidence of Mr. Madison's sentiments, at one period, is to be found in the address of Congress, of April twenty-sixth, seventeen hundred and eighty-three, which was planned by him, in conformity to his own ideas, and without any previous suggestions from the committee, and with his hearty co-operation in every part of the business. His conversations upon various occasions since have been expressive of a continuance in the same sentiment; nor, indeed, has he yet contradicted it, by any part of his official conduct. How far there is reason to apprehend a change in this particular, will be stated hereafter. As to the second part, the same address is an evidence of Mr. Madison's sentiments at the same period. And I had been informed that at a later period he had been, in the Legislature of Virginia, a strenuous and successful opponent of the

principle of discrimination. Add to this, that a variety of conversations had taken place between him and myself, respecting the public debt, down to the commencement of the new government, in none of which had he glanced at the idea of a change of opinion. I wrote him a letter after my appointment, in the recess of Congress, to obtain his sentiments on the subject of the finances. In his answer, there is not a lisp of his new system.

As to the third point, the question of an assumption of the State debts by the United States was in discussion when the convention that framed the present government was sitting at Philadelphia, and in a long conversation which I had with Mr. Madison in an afternoon's walk, I well remember that we were perfectly agreed in the expediency and propriety of such a measure; though we were both of opinion that it would be more advisable to make it a measure of administration than an article of Constitution, from the impolicy of multiplying obstacles to its reception on collateral details.

Under these circumstances you will naturally imagine that it must have been matter of surprise to me when I was apprised that it was Mr. Madison's intention to oppose my plan on both the last-mentioned points. Before the debate commenced,[1] I had a conversation with him on my report; in the course of which I alluded to the calculation I had

[1] Hamilton to Madison: "If Mr. Madison should be disengaged this evening, Mr. Hamilton would be obliged by an opportunity of conversing with him at his lodgings for half an hour. If engaged this evening he will thank him to say whether to-morrow evening will suit. Wednesday."

made of his sentiments, and the grounds of that calculation. He did not deny them; but alleged in his justification that the very considerable alienation of the debt, subsequent to the periods at which he had opposed a discrimination, had essentially changed the state of the question; and that as to the assumption, he had contemplated it to take place as matters stood at the peace. While the change of opinion avowed on the point of discrimination diminished my respect for the force of Mr. Madison's mind and the soundness of his judgment; and while the idea of reserving and setting afloat a vast mass of already extinguished debt, as the condition of a measure, the leading objects of which were an accession of strength to the national government, and an assurance of order and vigor in the national finances, by doing away with the necessity of thirteen complicated and conflicting systems of finance, appeared to me somewhat extraordinary, yet my previous impressions of the fairness of Mr. Madison's character, and my reliance on his good-will towards me, disposed me to believe that his suggestions were sincere, and even on the point of an assumption of the debts of the States as they stood at the peace, to lean towards a co-operation in his views, till on feeling the ground I found the thing impracticable, and on further reflection I thought it liable to immense difficulties. It was tried and failed with little countenance.

At this time and afterwards repeated intimations were given to me that Mr. Madison, from a spirit of rivalship, or some other cause, had become personally unfriendly to me; and one gentleman in par-

ticular, whose honor I have no reason to doubt, assured me that Mr. Madison, in a conversation with him, had made a pretty direct attempt to insinuate unfavorable impressions of me. Still I suspended my opinion on the subject. I knew the malevolent officiousness of mankind too well to yield a very ready acquiescence to the suggestions which were made, and resolved to wait till time and more experience should afford a solution. It was not till the last session that I became unequivocally convinced of the following truth: "that Mr. Madison, cooperating with Mr. Jefferson, is at the head of a faction decidedly hostile to me and my administration; and actuated by views, in my judgment, subversive of the principles of good government and dangerous to the Union, peace, and happiness of the country."

These are strong expressions, they may pain your friendship for one or both of the gentlemen whom I have named. I have not lightly resolved to hazard them. They are the result of a serious alarm in my mind for the public welfare, and of a full conviction that what I have alleged is a truth, and a truth which ought to be told, and well attended to by all the friends of the Union and efficient national government. The suggestion will, I hope, at least, awaken attention free from the bias of former prepossessions.

This conviction, in my mind, is the result of a long train of circumstances, many of them minute. To attempt to detail them all would fill a volume. I shall therefore confine myself to the mention of a few.

First.—As to the point of opposition to me and my administration.

Mr. Jefferson, with very little reserve, manifests his dislike of the funding system generally, calling in question the expediency of funding a debt at all. Some expressions, which he has dropped in my presence (sometimes without sufficient attention to delicacy), will not permit me to doubt on this point representations which I have had from various respectable quarters. I do not mean that he advocates directly the undoing of what has been done, but he censures the whole, on principles which, if they should become general, could not but end in the subversion of the system. In various conversations, with foreigners as well as citizens, he has thrown censure on my principles of government and on my measures of administration. He has predicted that the people would not long tolerate my proceedings, and that I should not long maintain my ground. Some of those whom he immediately and notoriously moves have even whispered suspicions of the rectitude of my motives and conduct. In the question concerning the bank he not only delivered an opinion in writing against its constitutionality and expediency, but he did it in a style and manner which I felt as partaking of asperity and ill humor toward me. As one of the trustees of the sinking fund, I have experienced in almost every leading question opposition from him. When any turn of things in the community has threatened either odium or embarrassment to me, he has not been able to suppress the satisfaction which it gave

him. A part of this is, of course, information, and might be misrepresentation, but it comes through so many channels, and so well accords with what falls under my own observation, that I can entertain no doubt.

I find a strong confirmation in the following circumstances: Freneau, the present printer of the *National Gazette*, who was a journeyman with Childs & Swain, at New York, was a known Anti-federalist. It is reduced to a certainty that he was brought to Philadelphia by Mr. Jefferson to be the conductor of a newspaper. It is notorious that contemporarily with the commencement of his paper he was a clerk in the Department of State, for foreign languages. Hence a clear inference that his paper has been set on foot and is conducted under the patronage and not against the views of Mr. Jefferson. What then is the complexion of this paper? Let any impartial man peruse all the numbers down to the present day, and I never was more mistaken if he does not pronounce that it is a paper devoted to the subversion of me and the measures in which I have had an agency; and I am little less mistaken if he does not pronounce that it is a paper of a tendency generally unfriendly to the government of the United States. It may be said that a newspaper being open to all the publications which are offered to it, its complexion may be influenced by other views than those of the editor. But the fact here is that whenever the editor appears it is in a correspondent dress. The paragraphs which appear as his own, the publications, not original, which are selected for his

press, are of the same malignant and unfriendly aspect; so as not to leave a doubt of the temper which directs the publication. Again, Brown, who publishes an evening paper called *The Federal Gazette*, was originally a zealous Federalist, and personally friendly to me. He has been employed by Mr. Jefferson as a printer to the government for the publication of the laws, and for some time past, until lately, the complexion of his press was equally bitter and unfriendly to me and to the government.

Lately Col. Pickering, in consequence of certain attacks upon him, got hold of some instances of misconduct of his which have served to hold him in check, and seemed to have varied his tone a little. I don't lay so much stress on this last case as on the former. There I find an internal evidence, which is as conclusive as can be expected in any similar case. Thus far as to Mr. Jefferson.

With regard to Mr. Madison, the matter stands thus: I have not heard, but in the one instance to which I have alluded, of his having held language unfriendly to me in private conversation, but in his public conduct there has been a more uniform and persevering opposition than I have been able to resolve into a sincere difference of opinion. I cannot persuade myself that Mr. Madison and I, whose politics had formerly so much the same point of departure, should now diverge so widely in our opinions of the measures which are proper to be pursued. The opinion I once entertained of the candor and simplicity and fairness of Mr. Madison's character, has, I acknowledge, given way to a decided opinion

that it is one of a peculiarly artificial and complicated kind. For a considerable part of the last session Mr. Madison lay in a great measure perdu. But it was evident from his votes and a variety of little movements and appearances, that he was the prompter of Mr. Giles and others who were the open instruments of the opposition. Two facts occurred in the course of the session which I view as unequivocal demonstrations of his disposition towards me. In one, a direct and decisive blow was aimed. When the Department of the Treasury was established, Mr. Madison was an unequivocal advocate of the principles which prevailed in it, and of the powers and duties which were assigned by it to the head of the department. This appeared, both from his private and public discourse, and I will add, that I have personal evidence that Mr. Madison is as well convinced as any man in the United States of the necessity of the arrangement which characterizes that establishment, to the orderly conducting of the business of the finances. Mr. Madison nevertheless opposed a reference to me to report ways and means for the Western expedition, and combated, on principle, the propriety of such references.

He well knew that if he had prevailed a certain consequence was my resignation; that I would not be fool enough to make pecuniary sacrifices and endure a life of extreme drudgery without opportunity either to do material good or to acquire reputation, and frequently with a responsibility in reputation for measures in which I had no hand, and in respect to which the part I had acted, if any, could not be

known. To accomplish this point an effectual train, as was supposed, was laid. Besides those who ordinarily acted under Mr. Madison's banners, several who had generally acted with me, from various motives—vanity, self-importance, etc., etc.,—were enlisted.

My overthrow was anticipated as certain, and Mr. Madison, laying aside his wonted caution, boldly led his troops, as he imagined, to a certain victory. He was disappointed. Though late, I became apprised of the danger. Measures of counteraction were adopted, and when the question was called Mr. Madison was confounded to find characters voting against him whom he counted upon as certain. Towards the close of the session another, though a more covert, attack was made. It was in the shape of a proposition to insert in the supplementary act respecting the public debt something by way of instruction to the trustees "to make their purchases of the debt at the lowest market price." In the course of the discussion of this point Mr. Madison dealt much in insidious insinuations calculated to give an impression that the public money, under my particular direction, had been unfaithfully applied to put undue advantages in the pockets of speculators, and to support the debt at an artificial price for their benefit. The whole manner of this transaction left no doubt in any one's mind that Mr. Madison was actuated by personal and political animosity. As to this last instance, it is but candid to acknowledge that Mr. Madison had a better right to act the enemy than on any former occasion. I had, some short time

before, subsequent to his conduct respecting the reference, declared openly my opinion of the views by which he was actuated towards me, and my determination to consider and treat him as a political enemy. An intervening proof of Mr. Madison's unfriendly intrigues to my disadvantage is to be found in the following incident, which I relate to you upon my honor, but, from the nature of it, you will perceive in the strictest confidence: The President, having prepared his speech at the commencement of the ensuing session, communicated it to Mr. Madison for his remarks. It contained, among other things, a clause concerning weights and measures, hinting the advantage of an invariable standard, which preceded, in the original state of the speech, a clause containing the mint. Mr. Madison suggested a transposition of these clauses and the addition of certain words, which I now forget, imparting an immediate connection between the two subjects. You may recollect that Mr. Jefferson proposes that the unit of weight and the unit in the coins shall be the same, and that my propositions are to preserve the dollar as a unit, adhering to its present quantity of silver and establishing the same proportion of alloy in the silver as in the gold coins. The evident design of this manœuvre was to commit the President's opinion in favor of Mr. Jefferson's idea in contradiction to mine, and, the worst of it is, without his being aware of the tendency of the thing. It happened that the President showed me the speech, altered in conformity to Mr. Madison's suggestion, just before it was copied for the purpose of being delivered, I

remarked to him the tendency of the alteration. He declared that he had not been aware of it, and had no such intention, and without hesitation agreed to expunge the words which were designed to connect the two subjects.

This transaction, in my opinion, not only furnishes a proof of Mr. Madison's intrigues in opposition to my measures, but charges him with an abuse of the President's confidence in him, by endeavoring to make him, without his knowledge, take part with one officer against another in a case in which they had given different opinions to the Legislature of the country. I forbore to awake the President's mind to this last inference, but it is among the circumstances which have convinced me that Mr. Madison's true character is the reverse of that simple, fair, candid one which he has assumed. I have informed you that Mr. Freneau was brought to Philadelphia by Mr. Jefferson, to be conductor of a newspaper. My information announced Mr. Madison as the means of negotiation, while he was at New York last summer. This, and the general coincidence and close intimacy between the two gentlemen, leave no doubt that their views are substantially the same.

Secondly, as to the tendency of the views of the two gentlemen who have been named. Mr. Jefferson is an avowed enemy to a funded debt. Mr. Madison disavows, in public, any intention to undo what has been done, but, in private conversation with Mr. Charles Carroll, Senator, (this gentleman's name I mention confidentially, though he mentioned the matter to Mr. King and several other gentlemen as

well as myself, and if any chance should bring you together you would easily bring him to repeat it to you,) he favored the sentiment in Mr. Mercer's speech, that a Legislature had no right to fund the debt by mortgaging permanently the public revenues, because they had no right to bind posterity. The inference is that what has been unlawfully done may be undone.

The discourse of partisans in the Legislature, and the publication in the party newspapers, direct their main battery against the principle of a funded debt, and represent it in the most odious light as a perfect Pandora's box.

If Mr. Barnwell of South Carolina, who appears to be a man of nice honor, may be credited, Mr. Giles declared, in a conversation with him, that if there was a question for reversing the funding system on the abstract point of the right of pledging and the utility of preserving public faith, he should be for reversal, merely to demonstrate his sense of the defect of right and the inutility of the thing. If positions equally extravagant were not publicly advanced by some of the party, and secretly countenanced by the most guarded and discreet of them, one would be led, from the absurdity of the declaration, to suspect misapprehension. But, from what is known, any thing may be believed. Whatever were the original merits of the funding system, after having been so solemnly adopted, and after so great a transfer of property under it, what would become of the government should it be reversed? What of the national reputation? Upon what system of morality

can so atrocious a doctrine be maintained? In me, I confess it excited indignation and horror!

What are we to think of those maxims of government by which the power of a Legislature is denied to bind the nation, by a contract in the affair of property for twenty-four years? For this is precisely the case of the debt. What are to become of all the legal rights of property, of all charters to corporations, nay, of all grants to a man, his heirs and assigns, for ever, if this doctrine be true? What is the term for which a government is in capacity to contract? Questions might be multiplied without end, to demonstrate the perniciousness and absurdity of such a doctrine.

In almost all the questions, great and small, which have arisen since the first session of Congress, Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Madison have been found among those who are disposed to narrow the federal authority. The question of a national bank is one example. The question of bounties to the fisheries is another. Mr. Madison resisted it on the ground of constitutionality, till it was evident, by the intermediate questions taken, that the bill would pass; and he then, under the wretched subterfuge of a change of a single word, "bounty" for "allowance," went over to the majority, and voted for the bill. On the militia bill, and in a variety of minor cases, he has leaned to abridging the exercise of federal authority, and leaving as much as possible to the States; and he lost no opportunity of sounding the alarm, with great affected solemnity, at encroachments, meditated on the rights of the States, and of

holding up the bugbear of a faction in the government having designs unfriendly to liberty.

This kind of conduct has appeared to me the more extraordinary on the part of Mr. Madison, as I know for a certainty, it was a primary article in his creed, that the real danger in our system was the subversion of the national authority by the preponderancy of the State governments. All his measures have proceeded on an opposite supposition. I recur again to the instance of Freneau's paper. In matters of this kind one cannot have direct proof of men's latent views; they must be inferred from circumstances. As coadjutor of Mr. Jefferson in the establishment of this paper, I include Mr. Madison in the consequences imputable to it. In respect to foreign politics, the views of these gentlemen are, in my judgment, equally unsound and dangerous. They have a womanish attachment to France and a womanish resentment against Great Britain. They would draw us into the closest embrace of the former, and involve us in all the consequences of her politics; and they would risk the peace of the country in their endeavors to keep us at the greatest possible distance from the latter. This disposition goes to a length, particularly in Mr. Jefferson, of which, till lately, I had no adequate idea. Various circumstances prove to me that if these gentlemen were left to pursue their own course, there would be, in less than six months, an open war between the United States and Great Britain. I trust I have a due sense of the conduct of France towards this country in the late revolution; and that I shall

always be among the foremost in making her every suitable return; but there is a wide difference between this and implicating ourselves in all her politics; between bearing good-will to her and hating and wrangling with all those whom she hates. The neutral and the pacific policy appears to me to mark the true path to the United States.

Having delineated to you what I conceive to be the true complexion of the politics of these gentlemen, I will not attempt a solution of these strange appearances. Mr. Jefferson, it is known, did not in the first instance cordially acquiesce in the new Constitution for the United States; he had many doubts and reserves. He left this country before we had experienced the imbecilities of the former.

In France, he saw government only on the side of its abuses. He drank freely of the French philosophy, in religion, in science, in politics. He came from France in the moment of a fermentation, which he had a share in exciting, and in the passions and feelings of which he shared both from temperament and situation. He came here probably with a too partial idea of his own powers; and with the expectation of a greater share in the direction of our councils than he has in reality enjoyed. I am not sure that he had not peculiarly marked out for himself the department of the finances.

He came, electrified with attachment to France, and with the project of knitting together the two countries in the closest political bands.

Mr. Madison had always entertained an exalted opinion of the talents, knowledge, and virtues of Mr.

Jefferson. The sentiment was probably reciprocal. A close correspondence subsisted between them during the time of Mr. Jefferson's absence from the country. A close intimacy arose upon his return.

Whether any peculiar opinions of Mr. Jefferson's concerning the public debt wrought a change in the sentiments of Mr. Madison (for it is certain that the former is more radically wrong than the latter), or whether Mr. Madison, seduced by the expectation of popularity, and possibly by the calculation of advantage to the State of Virginia, was led to change his own opinion, certain it is that a very material change took place, and that the two gentlemen were united in the new ideas. Mr. Jefferson was indiscreetly open in his approbation of Mr. Madison's principles, upon his first coming to the seat of government. I say indiscreetly, because a gentleman in the administration, in one department, ought not to have taken sides against another, in another department. The course of this business and a variety of circumstances which took place left Mr. Madison a very discontented and chagrined man, and begot some degree of ill-humor in Mr. Jefferson. Attempts were made by these gentlemen, in different ways, to produce a commercial warfare with Great Britain. In this, too, they were disappointed. And, as they had the liveliest wishes on the subject, their dissatisfaction has been proportionably great; and, as I had not favored the project, I was comprehended in their displeasure.

These causes, and perhaps some others, created, much sooner than I was aware of it, a systematic

opposition to me, on the part of these gentlemen. My subversion, I am now satisfied, has been long an object with them.

Subsequent events have increased the spirit of opposition and the feelings of personal mortification on the part of these gentlemen.

A mighty stand was made on the affair of the bank. There was much commitment in that case. I prevailed. On the mint business I was opposed from the same quarters and with still less success. In the affair of ways and means for the Western expedition, on the supplementary arrangements concerning the debt, except as to the additional assumption, my views have been equally prevalent in opposition to theirs. This current of success on the one side and of defeat on the other has rendered the opposition furious, and has produced a disposition to subvert their competitors, even at the expense of the government.

Another circumstance has contributed to widening the breach. 'T is evident, beyond a question, from every movement, that Mr. Jefferson aims with ardent desire at the Presidential chair. This, too, is an important object of the party-politics. It is supposed, from the nature of my former personal and political connections, that I may favor some other candidate more than Mr. Jefferson, when the question shall occur by the retreat of the present gentleman. My influence, therefore, with the community becomes a thing, on ambitious and personal grounds, to be resisted and destroyed. You know how much it was a point to establish the Secretary

of State, as the officer who was to administer the government in defect of the President and Vice-President. Here, I acknowledge, though I took far less part than was supposed, I ran counter to Mr. Jefferson's wishes; but if I had had no other reason for it, I had already experienced opposition from him, which rendered it a measure of self-defence. It is possible, too, (for men easily heat their imaginations when their passions are heated,) that they have by degrees persuaded themselves of what they may have at first only sported to influence others, namely, that there is some dreadful combination against State government and republicanism; which, according to them, are convertible terms. But there is so much absurdity in this supposition, that the admission of it tends to apologize for their hearts at the expense of their heads. Under the influence of all these circumstances the attachment to the government of the United States, originally weak in Mr. Jefferson's mind, has given way to something very like dislike in Mr. Madison's. It is so counteracted by personal feelings as to be more an affair of the head than of the heart; more the result of a conviction of the necessity of Union than of cordiality to the thing itself. I hope it does not stand worse than this with him. In such a state of mind both these gentlemen are prepared to hazard a great deal to effect a change. Most of the important measures of every government are connected with the treasury. To subvert the present head of it, they deem it expedient to risk rendering the government itself odious; perhaps foolishly thinking that they can

easily recover the lost affections and confidence of the people, and not appreciating, as they ought to do, the natural resistance to government, which in every community results from the human passions, the degree to which this is strengthened by the organized rivality of State governments, and the infinite danger that the national government, once rendered odious, will be kept so by these powerful and indefatigable enemies. They forget an old, but a very just, though a coarse saying, that it is much easier to raise the devil than to lay him. Poor Knox has come in for a share of their persecutions, as a man who generally thinks with me, and who has a portion of the President's good-will and confidence. In giving you this picture of political parties, my design is, I confess, to awaken your attention, if it has not yet been awakened, to the conduct of the gentlemen in question. If my opinion of them is founded, it is certainly of great moment to the public weal that they should be understood. I rely on the strength of your mind to appreciate men as they merit, when you have a clue to their real views.

A word on another point. I am told that serious apprehensions are disseminated in your State as to the existence of a monarchical party meditating the destruction of State and republican government. If it is possible that so absurd an idea can gain ground, it is necessary that it should be combated. I assure you, on my private faith and honor as a man, that there is not, in my judgment, a shadow of foundation for it. A very small number of men indeed may entertain theories less republican than Mr. Jef-

ferson and Mr. Madison, but I am persuaded there is not a man among them who would not regard as both criminal and visionary any attempt to subvert the republican system of the country. Most of these men rather fear that it may not justify itself by its fruits, than feel a predilection for a different form; and their fears are not diminished by the factious and fanatical politics which they find prevailing among a certain set of gentlemen and threatening to disturb the tranquillity and order of the government.

As to the destruction of State governments, the great and real anxiety is to be able to preserve the national from the too potent and counteracting influence of those governments. As to my own political creed, I give it to you with the utmost sincerity. I am affectionately attached to the republican theory. I desire above all things to see the equality of political rights, exclusive of all hereditary distinction, firmly established by a practical demonstration of its being consistent with the order and happiness of society. As to State governments, the prevailing bias of my judgment is that if they can be circumscribed within bounds, consistent with the preservation of the national government, they will prove useful and salutary. If the States were all of the size of Connecticut, Maryland, or New Jersey, I should decidedly regard the local governments as both safe and useful. As the thing now is, however, I acknowledge the most serious apprehensions, that the government of the United States will not be able to maintain itself against their influence. I

see that influence already penetrating into the national councils and preventing their direction. Hence, a disposition on my part towards a liberal construction of the powers of the national government, and to erect every fence, to guard it from depredations which is, in my opinion, consistent with constitutional propriety. As to any combination to prostrate the State governments, I disavow and deny it. From an apprehension lest the judiciary should not work efficiently or harmoniously, I have been desirous of seeing some national scheme of connection adopted as an amendment to the Constitution, otherwise I am for maintaining things as they are; though I doubt much the possibility of it, from a tendency in the nature of things towards the preponderancy of the State governments.

I said that I was affectionately attached to the republican theory. This is the real language of my heart, which I open to you in the sincerity of friendship; and I add that I have strong hopes of the success of that theory; but, in candor, I ought also to add that I am far from being without doubts. I consider its success as yet a problem. It is yet to be determined by experience whether it be consistent with that stability and order in government which are essential to public strength and private security and happiness.

On the whole, the only enemy which Republicanism has to fear in this country is in the spirit of faction and anarchy. If this will not permit the ends of government to be attained under it, if it engenders disorders in the community, all regular

and orderly minds will wish for a change, and the demagogues who have produced the disorder will make it for their own aggrandizement. This is the old story. If I were disposed to promote monarchy and overthrow State governments, I would mount the hobby-horse of popularity; I would cry out "usurpation," "danger to liberty," etc., etc.; I would endeavor to prostrate the national government, raise a ferment, and then "ride in the whirlwind, and direct the storm." That there are men acting with Jefferson and Madison who have this in view, I verily believe; I could lay my finger on some of them. That Madison does not mean it, I also verily believe; and I rather believe the same of Jefferson, but I read him upon the whole thus: "A man of profound ambition and violent passions."

You must be by this time tired of my epistle. Perhaps I have treated certain characters with too much severity. I have, however, not meant to do them injustice, and, from the bottom of my soul, believe I have drawn them truly; and it is of the utmost consequence to the public weal they should be viewed in their true colors. I yield to this impression. I will only add that I make no clandestine attacks on the gentlemen concerned. They are both apprised indirectly from myself of the opinion I entertain of their views. With the truest regard and esteem.[1]

[1] Reprinted from the *History of the Republic*, iv., 520. This long, interesting, and most important letter was written at the time of the troubles in the Cabinet. It is evidently much more than merely a letter to a friend, and was undoubtedly written with a specific purpose, probably to explain through Carrington to the Virginia Federalists

TO GENERAL OTHO H. WILLIAMS

PHILADELPHIA, June 9, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR:

I feel myself not a little a delinquent in regard to a certain paper you forwarded to me. I will now explain the reason of its non-appearance. Though I thought it a merited and a very good reproof on certain folks, as well as calculated to throw useful light on transactions interesting to the fame of our deceased friend,[1] *as the business depending was taking a favorable turn* when I received your letter, I doubted the expediency of starting any new game, lest it should wound the pride and jar the nerves of more than the individual meant to be chastised, so as to perhaps do harm to a cause we both wish to promote.

If things had continued on an unpromising train, I should have been willing to have taken the chance of the publication. In me it would have gratified feelings of more than one kind.

I at first intended to reserve the publication for the conclusion of the business, but then I doubted whether it was worth while to stir again the question. It could not serve the original purpose, and it was not *necessary* to the fame of the General, that stands unassailable with *success*.

If any *impressions* have fallen under your notice

why the writer had parted company with Madison and had attacked Jefferson. It is the ablest and best exposition that we have of the condition of politics at that time; and, although written by a party leader is singularly moderate in tone and is clearly intended to be fair to all.

[1] General Greene, of whom General Williams had written a defence.

which induce you to think this last conclusion erroneous, the publication at this time will not be too late for that purpose.

P. S.—With your permission, I will retain the paper as an interesting record of some particulars which were not before known to me.[1]

TO GOUVERNEUR MORRIS

PHILADELPHIA, June 22, 1792.

MY DEAR SIR:

I accept your challenge to meet you in the field of mutual confidential communication; though I cannot always promise punctuality or copiousness. I will, however, do the best I can.

Will it not be a necessary preliminary to agree upon a cypher? One has been devised for me which, though simple in execution, is tedious in preparation. I may shortly forward it. In the meantime let us settle some appellations for certain official characters. I will call,

The President, Scævola.	The Vice-President, Brutus.
Sec'y of State, Scipio.	Sec'y of War, Sempronius.
Sec'y of Treasury, Paulus	Attorney-General, Lysander.

[1] I owe this letter, now first printed from the original, to the kindness of Mr. Otho H. Williams, of Baltimore, the grandson of the Revolutionary soldier. The paper referred to is among the Hamilton MSS. in the State Department.

SENATORS

Robert Morris, Cato.
Rufus King, Leonidas.
Aaron Burr, Sævius.
—— Monroe, Sydney.
Oliver Ellsworth, Virginius.
George Cabot, Portius.
Richard Henry Lee, Marcus.
Ralph Izard, Themistocles.

REPRESENTATIVES

James Madison, Tarquin.
Abraham Baldwin, Hampden.
—— Mercer, Tacitus.
Thomas Fitzsimmons, Cicero.
Jeremiah Wadsworth, Titius.
—— Giles, Chronus.
—— Ames, Valerius.
John Lawrence, Solon.
—— Murray, Livy.
Egbert Benson, Cromwell.
Jonathan Trumbull, Quintus.

You see that I have avoided characteristic names. In my next you shall have a sketch of the general state of the country, its politics and parties. I thank you for your calculations, as I will for every suggestion you shall make. I shall seldom fail to get either a new idea or a new appellation of an old one. I shall endeavor to put in train, by this opportunity, the papers you advise to be sent to the Russian Ambassador. If your courage is not put to the test by being put to wear what you have won, it will not be my fault. Do you know enough of the catechism in the vulgar tongue to fulfil what you have lately undertaken? [1]

[1] Reprinted from Sparks's *Life of Gouverneur Morris*, vol. i., p. 373.

TO COLONEL HETH [1] AND OTHERS

PHILADELPHIA, June 26, 1792.

GENTLEMEN:

I have received your circular-letter of the 28th of February last.

I consider it as addressed to me in the capacity of a fellow-soldier, and in that capacity I now acknowledge and answer it.

Respect for you, gentlemen, and for those on whose behalf you write, does not permit me to be silent, and in replying, the frankness which is due to you and them, and which is not less due to my own character, forbids me to dissemble.

My judgment does not accord with the views which are announced in your letter. A perseverance in them will not, I believe, be productive of any advantage to the parties, and may I fear be attended with some public inconveniences, which I am persuaded they would regret.

I also have made sacrifices *with* the army, and, what is less known, *for* the army. I feel that I love those who remain of that respectable band, and that no one can be more solicitous than myself for their welfare. I trust, therefore, they will do justice to my motives on the present occasion.[2]

[1] Colonel William Heth, of Virginia.

[2] This letter refers to a claim made by the army for compensation for losses incurred by their having been paid in a depreciated currency. This movement had been made political in the South, and the foundation of attacks on the North for buying soldiers' claims, and also on Washington and Hamilton. A second circular was then issued reiterating the claim and asking the co-operation of all officers. This was the subject of Hamilton's letter.

TO WILLIAM SETON

(*Private.*)

June 26, 1792.

DEAR SIR:

This accompanies an official letter. I acknowledge I doubt the accuracy of the opinion of the attorney-general on the last point. A law is not to be so literally construed as to involve *absurdity* and *oppression*. The Legislature might *reasonably* restrain its officers from future *buying* and *selling* of stock, but could not reasonably prevent their making a disposition of property which they had previously acquired according to the laws of their country.

At the same time, for greater caution, I should in my own case follow the strict interpretation.

All my property in the funds is about $800, 3 per cents. These, at a certain period, I should have sold, had I not been unwilling to give occasion to cavil.

The restriction itself, as it respects the officers of the treasury, and I rather think the commissioners of loans, is a wise and unexceptionable one.

But the propriety of its further extension is not obvious, and I doubt whether it will be lasting. The act passed in a prodigious hurry.

TO RUFUS KING

PHILADELPHIA, June 28, 1792.

MY DEAR KING:

I have not, as you well may imagine, been inattentive to your political squabble. I believe you

are right (though I have not accurately examined), but I am not without apprehension that a ferment may be raised which may not be allayed when you wish it. 'T is not to be forgotten that the opposers of Clinton are the real friends to order and good government, and that it will ill become them to give an example to the contrary.

Some folks are talking of conventions and the bayonet. But the case will justify neither a resort to such principles nor to violence. Some amendments of your election laws, and possibly the impeachment of some of the canvassers who have given proofs of *premeditated* partiality, will be very well, and it will answer good purposes to keep alive, within proper bounds, the public indignation. But beware of extremes!

There appears to be no *definite declared* objects of the movements on foot, which render them more ticklish. What *can* you do? What do you *expect* to effect? [1]

TO ELIAS BOUDINOT

PHILADELPHIA, July 12, 1792.

DEAR SIR:

I wrote you, a day or two since, on the subject of the advertisement.

You recollect there is a power to borrow to be

[1] Now first printed from the King papers in the possession of Dr. Charles King. In R. King's handwriting on the opposite page is the following: "I have had no agency in promoting the measures adopted respecting the decision of the canvassers. I have, however, felt the utmost indignation."

given to the committee, under the seal of the corporation. No time ought to be lost in preparing and executing the power and making application for the loan. Not more than $30,000, in addition to the $10,000 already borrowed, need at first be asked for. I shall write to Mr. Seton by to-morrow's post.

Pray, my friend, let nothing slumber.

TO WASHINGTON

PHILADELPHIA, July 22, 1792.

SIR:

I wrote you on Monday last, transmitting a resolution of the Commissioners of the Sinking Fund. Nothing in the way of public business requiring your attention has since occurred.

There is a matter I beg leave to mention to you confidentially, in which your interposition, if you deem it advisable, may have a good effect.

I have long had it at heart that some good system of regulations for the forwarding supplies to the army, issuing them there and accounting for them to the Department of War, should be established. On conversing with the Secretary at War, I do not find that any such now exists; nor had the intimations I have taken the liberty to give on the subject, though perfectly well received, hitherto produced the desired effect. The utility of the thing does not seem to be as strongly impressed on the mind of the Secretary at War as it is on mine.

It has occurred to me that if you should think fit to call by letter upon the Secretary of the Treasury

and the Secretary at War to report to you the *system and regulations under which the procuring, issuing, and accounting for supplies to the army is conducted*, it would produce what appears to be now wanting. I submit the idea accordingly.

END OF VOL. IX

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